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THE

WORKS

OF THE

Rev. John Witherspoon,

D. D. L. L. D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE, AT PRINCETON NEW-JERSEY.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

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FERVENCY AND IMPORTUNITY IN PRAYER.

A

SERMON.

GENESIS xxxii. 26.

And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

Second ſermon on the text.

II. WE proceed now to the *ſecond* thing propoſed in the diſtribution of the ſubject; which was, To ſhow you the duty and reaſonableneſs of wreſtling and importunity in prayer. Here I am ſenſible, that a corrupt and impatient mind may be able to muſter up objections againſt it. There is ſomething wonderful and unſearchable in all the works of God, and in none more, as it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, than in the methods of his grace. In particular, it may appear ſurpriſing, that he ſhould exerciſe his people with ſuch conflicts and trials, that it ſhould be neceſſary to overcome him, as it were, by importunity, before we can obtain thoſe bleſſings which himſelf hath commanded us to aſk, and which he hath promiſed to beſtow. Why, will it be ſaid, does a God of mercy, and of infinite fullneſs, to whom all our wants and weakneſſes are perfectly known, wait for our prayers, before he will part with what is ſo much needed by us? Why doth he, who knoweth our frame, and remembers that we are duſt, unneceſſarily throw obſtructions in our way, and wrap himſelf up in darkneſs, to diſcourage our approach?

But how does this ſurpriſe increaſe, when we conſider how unequal we are for the conflict, if no ſtrength but our own is oppoſed to the Almighty! nay, that our ſtrength for reſiſtance muſt come only from himſelf: ſo that he wounds, and he heals; he oppreſſes, and he ſuſtains; he diſcourages, and he invites. It is by prayer that we muſt obtain every bleſſing from the Father of lights; and one of the greateſt and moſt neceſſary of theſe bleſſings is the ſpirit of prayer itſelf. My brethren, when either unbelief or profanity moves any ſuch difficulties as theſe, I think it my duty to call upon you, in the firſt place, to bow yourſelves before the ſovereignty of God. There is an unſearchable impenetrable depth in the divine wiſdom, whether we look upon the works of nature, or of grace. As Creator of the world, he could, no doubt, in a moment, with one word of his power, have raiſed the whole fabric in perfection; yet it pleaſed him, in a gradual manner, to finiſh every part by the addition of another, for the ſpace of ſix days. When he gave the firſt promiſe to Adam, or when he renewed it to the father of the faithful, he could, no doubt, have ſent the Saviour into the world, to finiſh tranſgreſſion, and make an end of ſin; yet he ſaw it proper to give only diſtant intimations of this bleſſed period, and to defer the long-expected appearance till the fulneſs of time, while the nations were ſuffered to ſit for many ages in darkneſs, and in the region and ſhadow of death. In the ſame manner he often takes a great variety of ſteps with his people before they are made partakers of his promiſes.

But notwithſtanding that ſomething muſt ſtill remain myſterious, and beyond the comprehenſion of a finite creature, in the management of God, who "giveth not "account of any of his matters," we may ſee much propriety and beauty in this part of his procedure. And is it not our duty to attend to it? We may ſee the reaſonableneſs, nay we may perceive the wiſdom, of his requiring a holy fervency, wreſtling, and importunity in prayer: for it ſerves to engrave upon our hearts, and even to work into our affections, ſome of the moſt important truths of religion, and ſuch as will have the moſt powerful and ex-

tenſive influence upon our temper and practice. This will plainly appear from the three following conſiderations.

1. Fervency of ſpirit, and importunity, in prayer, is ſuitable and neceſſary, becauſe of the greatneſs and glory of that God with whom we hold communion, as well as it ſerves to ſtrengthen and improve the ſenſe of this upon our minds. The infinite majeſty of God, and the unmeaſurable diſtance at which he is removed from all created weakneſs, is often ſpoken of in ſcripture with admiration of his condeſcenſion: Pſal. viii. 3, 4. "When I con- "ſider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon "and the ſtars which thou haſt ordained; what is man, "that thou art mindful of him? and the ſon of man, that "thou viſiteſt him?" Under a deep impreſſion of the ſame great truth, Solomon ſays, 2 Chron. vi. 18. "But "will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? "behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot con- "tain thee; how much leſs this houſe which I have built?" Is not, then, ſome fervor of affection due to the greatneſs and glory of that God whom we worſhip? Our affections ſhould always, in their ſtrength and exertion, be in proportion to their object, its dignity and worth. Indifference and careleſſneſs in an inferior towards a ſuperior is always counted a mark of diſdain. We naturally ſuppoſe, that thoſe in great and high ſtations ought to be approached with reverence, and ſolicited in the humbleſt manner, by their inferiors, who hope to ſhare in their bounty; and the more exalted the perſon, the more ſubmiſſive the poſture, and the more earneſt the ſupplication. Much more ought this to take place between God and us. On this account it is, probably at leaſt on this amongſt others, that indifference and coldneſs in religion is repreſented as peculiarly the object of divine deteſtation: Rev. iii. 15, 16. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold "nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then be- "cauſe thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I "will ſpue thee out of my mouth."

2. Our own great unworthineſs, who are the objects of divine love, and admitted to this ſacred intercourſe,

ſhould powerfully excite us to fervency in pleading. This is preciſely a counterpart to the former conſideration, and greatly ſtrengthens the concluſion. Even the higheſt of the ſpirits above, moſt eminent in knowledge and ſanctity, who ſtand neareſt to the throne of God, we are told, cover their faces with their wings, as loſt in reſpect and wonder, when they look to him who dwells in inacceſſible light. How much more "man, who is a "worm, and the ſon of man, who is a worm, whoſe foun-"dation is in the duſt, who dwells in houſes of clay, and "is cruſhed before the moth!" Accordingly, in ſome of the examples we have of the moſt importunate pleading and wreſtling in prayer, this is the very difficulty which ſeems to ſtand in the way, and requires the greateſt efforts of holy boldneſs to overcome; as in the account we have of Abraham's interceſſion for devoted Sodom, Gen. xviii. 27. "And Abraham anſwered and ſaid, Behold now, I "have taken upon me to ſpeak unto the Lord, which am "but duſt and aſhes." And again, in the 32d verſe, "And he ſaid, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will "ſpeak yet but this once: Peradventure ten ſhall be found "there. And he ſaid, I will not deſtroy it for ten's ſake."

But, my brethren, I beſeech you remember, it is not our frail nature, and limited powers only, that point out our unworthineſs; but our guilt and impurity, ſo oppoſite and ſo odious to the divine nature. This, I have ſhown you in the preceding diſcourſe, is one of the greateſt hinderances of our acceſs to God in prayer. And may we not ſay, How ſuitable, how neceſſary is it, that, in order to keep us ſtill deeply humble, God ſhould ſometimes cover himſelf with a cloud, and exerciſe the ſinner with ſtrong crying and tears, before he will vouchſafe the intimations of his love? This reaſon will be felt, and that the moſt ſenſibly by the beſt and moſt dutiful of his children, as their ſanctification continues imperfect ſo long as they are here below. How ſhould a ſenſe of guilt and miſery at once increaſe our ſelf-abaſement, and add to the earneſtneſs of our deſires! There cannot be a juſter deſcription, both of our ſtate and duty, where miſery and weakneſs conſpire in ſhowing the neceſſity and difficulty of wreſt-

ling with God, than the apoſtle hath given us, Rom. viii. 26. " Likewiſe the Spirit alſo helpeth our infirmities: for " we know not what we ſhould pray for as we ought: but " the Spirit itſelf maketh interceſſion for us with groanings " which cannot be uttered."

3. The duty and reaſonableneſs of wreſtling and importunity in prayer, appears from the ineſtimable value of the mercies to be obtained. Should there not be a proportionable ſtrength of deſire to the worth of the bleſſings in proſpect? Now, who can compute the value of the divine favor, and all its happy effects? and therefore who can compute the guilt of indifference, and the neceſſity of fervor in aſking it? The bleſſings of ſalvation in general are in their nature and ſource unſpeakable, and in their duration without end.—On the one hand, deliverance from everlaſting miſery, from the wrath of an almighty and incenſed God. True it is, that thoſe who are but yet in the way muſt be very unable to form juſt conceptions of this. But we may in general conclude, from the glory of creating power, which is in ſo many inſtances diſplayed before our eyes, how fearful a thing it muſt be to be the monuments of the vengeance of ſuch a God. He who is mighty to make and ſave, is alſo mighty to deſtroy. This is particularly felt by the ſinner, when, humbled by conviction, and in every inward conflict there is a repetition of the ſame diſtreſs, as it ariſes from the ſame cauſe.

On the other hand, what muſt be the value of everlaſting happineſs in the preſence and the enjoyment of God! How bleſſed, beyond expreſſion, muſt the believer be when the fullneſs of the divine benignity, of which we have now acceſs to taſte only ſome ſmaller and more diſtant ſtreams, ſhall be the portion of the ſoul! What ſupplications ſhould we not make, when we are aſſured, that importunity may obtain ſo rich a treaſure! And let me add, how valuable preſent fellowſhip and communion with God, which is the earneſt and foretaſte of complete deliverance from the one, and the eternal unchangeable poſſeſſion of the other! Say now, my brethren, is it not juſt and reaſonable, that theſe bleſſings ſhould be deſired with ardor, and ſought with importunity? What fervent lan-

guage have we from the ſcripture-ſaints upon this ſubject! Pſ. xlii. 1, 2, "As the hart panteth after the water-"brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God. My ſoul "thirſteth for God, for the living God: when ſhall I come "and appear before God?" Pſ. lxiii. 1, 2. "O God, "thou art my God, early will I ſeek thee: my ſoul thirſt-"eth for thee, my fleſh longeth for thee in a dry and "thirſty land, where no water is: to ſee thy power and "thy glory, ſo as I have ſeen thee in the ſanctuary." Is it any wonder that there ſhould be often trials and conflicts in the way to ſo honorable a relation, and ſo happy a ſtate? What is cheaply obtained, is commonly eſteemed of little worth. Is it to be expected, then, that God ſhould proſtitute the bleſſings of his love to cold and diſdainful petitions, to lukewarm and indifferent petitioners? And are there not alas! too many who "aſk and have not, becauſe they "aſk amiſs," who, by their feeble and heartleſs demands, do juſtify, and, if I may uſe ſuch an expreſſion, even ſolicit a refuſal?

III. We proceed to the *third* thing propoſed in the method; which was, To point out the great advantages which flow from wreſtling with God, Theſe in conſequence of what hath been already ſaid, may be conſidered as all centring in one point, *viz.* its power and efficacy in procuring the bleſſings. Nothing can be ſaid ſtronger on the benefit of wreſtling with God, than that we ſhall aſſuredly prevail. The ſucceſs of Jacob's wreſtling is recorded in the paſſage immediately following the text, verſe 27, 28, 29. "And he ſaid unto him, What is thy name? "And he ſaid Jacob. And he ſaid, Thy name ſhall be "called no more Jacob, but Iſrael: for as a prince haſt "thou power with God and with men, and haſt prevailed. "And Jacob aſked him, and ſaid, Tell me, I pray thee, "thy name. And he ſaid, Wherefore is it that thou doſt "aſk after my name? and he bleſſed him there." But that I may illuſtrate this a little in a practical manner, obſerve, that the efficacy of wreſtling with God in prayer, appears from the three following conſiderations.

1. It prepares and disposes the people of God for receiving his mercies, and in some cases is itself the actual possession of them. Every part of the divine conduct towards his saints is full of wisdom, and full of grace. One reason why he who knows our wants, requires us to pray, is, that we may be prepared for a profitable supply. We may also rest assured, that he will not delay his interposition one moment beyond the fittest season. Now, that ardent prayer, wrestling, and importunity with God, is the best preparation for receiving his mercies, is plain, both in respect of worth and capacity. It may seem indeed improper to speak of any fitness as to worth for receiving the divine mercies, which are all free and unmerited on our part, however dearly purchased on the part of our surety. But, my brethren, with due caution, we may also take in this consideration, the rather that it is in the exercise of prayer that this fitness is obtained: which plainly shews, that it cometh from God, that it is his own gift, and his own work. Is not that person the fitter for deliverance from distress of any kind, and for the communications of divine favor, who is wholly emptied of himself, truly and deeply humbled, brought prostrate before the Divine Majesty, convinced and satisfied of the vanity of all created enjoyments, and breathing after God, as his sole refuge and consolation, which he will not, and cannot forego?

May we not also say, that he is much more fit, than one, on the other hand, who flies from God with impatient complaints, or sullen disdain; or who, without asking help from above, when one earthly comfort fails him, cleaves the closer to another? The great, if not the only end of divine correction, is, to weaken the power of sin, to make us feel the vanity of the creature, and to break every attachment to the world that is inordinate and excessive. When this end is obtained, therefore, must not the rod be withdrawn? and will not this promise be certainly accomplished? that the Lord will "appoint unto them that "mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the "oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the "spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of

" righteouſneſs, the planting of the Lord, that he might " be glorified ;" Iſ. lxi. 3. If we look into the ſcripture-qualifications for receiving the communications of divine love, we ſhall find the chief of them to be, the earneſtneſs of our own deſires: Iſ. lv. 1. " Ho, every one that thirſt-" eth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; " come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk " without money, and without price."

Further wreſtling and importunity in prayer gives a capacity of reliſhing the mercies of God. They are then, and not till then in the ſame degree, truly mercies, earneſtly deſired, infinitely prized. It is a common and beaten remark, That the worth of any mercy is never known till we are deprived of it. There is great acceſs to obſerve this in the Chriſtian life, not only in its beginning, but in every ſtep of its progreſs. O how refreſhing is the intimation of pardon to a convinced ſinner, who hath long trembled through fear of wrath, or to the believer, who hath long groaned under a ſpirit of bondage! O how raviſhing is a ſenſe of divine love to that child of God who hath long complained of the hiding of his Father's face! When, after he hath been loſt on a ſea of temptations, one wave or billow following cloſe upon the back of another, he is at laſt received into a peaceful heaven! the *everlasting arms* are ſtretched round about him, the *faithfulness of God* is his ſhield and buckler, and the ſtrength of the *Almighty* his impregnable ſecurity? There is no ſuch ſtayedneſs or compoſure of mind as after a variety of trials. The exerciſed Chriſtian has tried and thrown away every broken reed, one after another; he hath found the vanity of every refuge of lies; and hath ſettled his hope on the immoveable foundation of the rock of ages, which ſhall never fail.

I added, in entering on this particular, that wreſtling and importunity in prayer is in many caſes itſelf the poſſeſſion of the very mercies we deſire. It is the exerciſe of almoſt every gracious diſpoſition. To increaſe in ſanctification, to have his graces ſtrengthened, and his corruptions ſubdued, is the habitual and prevailing deſire of every real believer. But how can this be more effectually ob-

tained than by fervent prayer? How, and where, can any gracious diſpoſition be either more improved and ſtrengthened, or more clearly diſcerned, than when it is in exerciſe. Faith, love, penitential ſorrow, truſt, and reſignation, are the very diſpoſitions eſſential to a wreſtling believer. Perhaps ſome will ſay, True indeed; but they are only attempting to ſhew themſelves, often diſcovering their weakneſs, ſometimes yielding to their oppoſites. Alas! ſays the Chriſtian, my faith is often over-matched with unbelief, and my love contradicted by impatient complaints: what is my penitential ſorrow but weeping over a hard heart? my truſt and reſignation is but a ſhort-lived promiſe: in a little time my courage fails, and I am ready to tremble at the falling of a leaf. But, my dear brethren, is not the importunate wreſtler maintaining the conflict, inſtead of yielding to the ſtream? and how infinitely preferable are his hours of deepeſt anguiſh to that ſlothful and unequal conduct to be obſerved in many ſecure and formal Chriſtians! It is alſo certain, that many times deliverance comes unlooked for. As the Pſalmiſt ſays, that whilſt he was muſing the fire burned; ſo it frequently happens, that a gracious God, viſits diſtreſſed ſouls, even when they leaſt expect it, with the joy of his ſalvation, and cauſeth the bones which he hath broken to rejoice.

2. The efficacy of importunate prayer appears from the promiſes of ſucceſs which are annexed to it in ſcripture. I muſt here begin by obſerving, that there are many commands in the word of God to pray, to pray without ceaſing, to continue inſtant in prayer. Now, every command to pray, contains in it a promiſe of a gracious anſwer from the hearer of prayer. It neceſſarily implies it. The truth of God is a pledge and ſecurity for it. He would not deceive us with vain hopes, or put us upon a fruitleſs attempt: for he is not a man, that he ſhould lie. But beſides this general conſideration, there are many expreſs promiſes particularly to the earneſtneſs and importunity of the deſire: Prov. ii. 3, 4, 5. "Yea, "if thou crieſt after knowledge, and lifteſt up thy voice "for underſtanding; if thou ſeekeſt her as ſilver, and "ſearcheſt for her, as for hid treaſures: then ſhalt thou

" underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge " God." See alſo the parable of the importunate widow, and the unjuſt judge, Luke xviii. 1. which concludes thus, ver. 7. " And ſhall not God avenge his own elect, " which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long " with them?

Let me beg your attention to another paſſage recorded in the 17th chapter of Matthew, where there was brought to our Saviour a poſſeſſed perſon, whom his diſciples could not cure: ver. 19, 20, 21. " Then came the diſciples " to Jeſus apart, and ſaid, Why could not we caſt him " out? And Jeſus ſaid unto them, Becauſe of your un- " belief: for verily I ſay unto you, If ye have faith as a " grain of muſtard-ſeed, ye ſhall ſay unto this mountain, " Remove hence to yonder place, and it ſhall remove; " and nothing ſhall be impoſſible unto you. Howbeit " this kind goeth not out, but by prayer and faſting." This paſſage is ſomewhat remarkable, and entirely to our preſent purpoſe. It ſhews, that in the œconomy of divine grace, there are ſome mercies that may be obtained by leſs, and ſome that require more earneſt and fervent prayer. This ſpecies of devils, it ſeems, would not yield to the ſame influence that others did. See only further James v. 16. " Confeſs your faults one to another, and " pray one for another, that ye may be healed: The ef- " fectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth " much."

3. In the *laſt* place, The ſame thing appears from the daily experience of the people of God, and many memorable examples of the efficacy of prayer. I might cite a great number of theſe to you from the holy ſcriptures, which are not only a ſacred repoſitory of divine truth, but a hiſtory of divine Providence. You may take the few following inſtances. Abraham's interceſſory prayer for Sodom, in which that ancient patriarch, honored with the glorious title of the *friend of God*, was allowed to plead with him, to repeat and urge his requeſt, as well as to ſtrengthen it with arguments. It is true, it ſaved not the whole city from deſtruction; yet was it heard in every part of it, according to its tenor. Nay, even

though the ten righteous, which was his loweſt ſuppoſition, were not found in it; yet the few righteous that were there, were not involved in the general calamity, but ſuffered to eſcape. Take alſo the example of Elias, as cited by the apoſtle James, chap. v. 17, 18. "Elias "was a man ſubject to like paſſions as we are, and he "prayed earneſtly that it might not rain: and it rained not "on the earth by the ſpace of three years and ſix months. "And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and "the earth brought forth her fruit." See the caſe of Daniel recorded in the 2d chapter of that book, particularly the 17th, 18th, 19th verſes of that chapter, where you will learn, that, by the united prayer of Daniel and his companions, the ſecret of the king's dream was communicated to them in a revelation from heaven. I only add the inſtance recorded Matth. xv. 21. and downwards, where the woman of Canaan ſo importunately preſſes her requeſt, and at laſt receives this anſwer: ver. 28. "Then "Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her, O woman, great is "thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her "daughter was made whole from that very hour."

I might eaſily mention many more recent examples of the efficacy of prayer; but thoſe which have been already produced are abundantly ſufficient. The truth is, I am perſuaded that every ſerious Chriſtian is able to recollect examples of it from his own experience; and ſurely they are of all others moſt inexcuſable, who reſtrain prayer before God, after they have known the unſpeakable benefit which flows from it.

IV. Let us now make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid on this ſubject. And,

1. Suffer me to improve what hath been ſaid, for the conviction and reproof of thoſe who are habitually unmindful of this important duty. Alas! my brethren, what reaſon have we to complain of the neglect of wreſtling, and want of importunity in prayer! Is not the language itſelf become unfaſhionable, and liable to ſcorn? As a perſon as eminent in ſtation as in piety once ſaid, "Men "have now deviſed a ſmooth and eaſy way to heaven,

"quite conſiſtent with the ſpirit of the world, in which "temptations and ſpiritual conflicts, and inward trials, "are unknown." But be aſſured, however changeable we are in our fancy and inclination, the word of God abideth for ever. There is very great reaſon to fear, nay there is good ground to affirm, that thoſe who are ſtrangers to wreſtling with God in prayer, are ſleeping in ſecurity, and under the dominion of ſin. You will ſay perhaps, you live at eaſe and undiſturbed. It may be ſo, and it is ſo much the worſe; for the prince of this world will always conſult the peace and quietneſs of his own ſubjects.

I would earneſtly intreat every hearer of the goſpel to ſuffer this reproof to enter into his mind, as it is what can be certainly known only to God and your own ſouls. Though there is ſufficient outward evidence of the general neglect of this duty, how far any perſon is particularly guilty, muſt be left to the determination of his own conſcience, and the judgment of him who ſeeth and ſearcheth the heart. If there is any among you who habitually deſpiſeth prayer, who makes every little buſineſs every little indiſpoſition or lazineſs of mind, an excuſe for neglecting or poſtponing it: if there are any who ſatisfy themſelves with a dead curſory formality in duty; who call in queſtion the reality of communion with God in others, becauſe they are ſtrangers to it themſelves; without all doubt they have great cauſe to fear, that they are in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity. Tell me, what is the reaſon of your backwardneſs to drawing near to God? Is it not, that you are afraid of coming into his preſence? Is it not, that you cannot bear the opening of your hearts? Is it not from ſome dark jealouſy and ſuſpicion, that all is not right with you, though you had rather cover than confeſs it? My earneſt prayer to God is, that though you keep at a diſtance from him, he may not keep at a diſtance from you; that he may, by his Spirit, convince you of your danger, and, in great mercy, deliver you from this miſerable ſtate.

2. You may learn, from what has been ſaid, one great cauſe of the low ſtate of religion, and the barrenneſs of ordinances among us at preſent. It is the neglect of prayer,

and that many, though they may condescend to ask, yet do not think it worth their while to wrestle for the blessing. The profane are not the only persons justly chargeable with a failure in this part of their duty. Many real Christians are apt to slacken their diligence in this important exercise, and many often read their sin in their punishment. But is it not very wonderful, my brethren, that those who have once tasted that the Lord is gracious, who have known the sweetness of communion with God, should ever lose it by their own indifference and backwardness to maintain it? Yet here we must, of necessity, lay the blame. We must still say, in justification of his procedure, Is. lix. 1, 2. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not short-"ened, that it cannot save: neither his ear heavy, that it "cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated be-"tween you and your God, and your sins have hid his "face from you, that he will not hear." It seems to appear from the experience of Christians, that God is jealous of their treatment of his love, and deeply resents the alienation of their affections; and therefore, to have sensible joy in him, and to walk in the comfort of the holy Ghost, which is so great a privilege, cannot be preserved without the greatest watchfulness on their part, and the greatest constancy in prayer.

3. Suffer me now, in a few words, to exhort every person in this assembly, (and in particular those who have so lately renewed their engagement to God, over the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Christ,) to give themselves unto prayer. (Of what use is your being admitted to this sacred table, if it do not incline you to live nearer to God in the habitual tenor of your life?) This is the very privilege which we obtain by the blood of Christ, that we have access with boldness and confidence through the faith of him. This is the very advantage that we obtain by his continual intercession before the throne, Heb. iv. 14, 16. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is "passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold "fast our profession. Let us therefore come boldly unto "the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find "grace to help in time of need." Again, have you not

devoted your lives to the ſervice of God? have you not promiſed to keep his commandments? How do you expect to fulfil your promiſe? Are you not ready to ſay, 'Not unleſs he be pleaſed himſelf to preſerve and keep 'me; not unleſs he put his Spirit within me, and write 'his laws in my heart?' And do you not know, that he hath ſaid, "Yet for all theſe things will I be enquired of "by the houſe of Iſrael to do it for them?" I will aſk you one queſtion more. Do you not know that you are yet in an evil world? Do you not know what variety of temptations and ſufferings you may yet be expoſed to? How ſhall you bear up under trials; how ſhall you "glorify "God in the day of viſitation," if you live habitually at a diſtance from him? Chriſtians, it is to him you muſt look when trouble cometh upon you. All other refuge will ſoon fail: and vanity, vanity, be ſeen written upon the creature. But with what confuſion muſt you then lift up your eyes to him, if you forget him in proſperity! Therefore let me beſeech you, in the moſt earneſt manner, to renew your diligence in the exerciſe of prayer. In a particular manner, I muſt recommend this exerciſe to young perſons. You, my dear brethren, are expoſed to many dangers, your ſtrength ſmall, your experience little, your knowledge imperfect. Live a life of prayer, and dependence upon God. Daniel and his companions were young perſons, yet mighty in prayer: therefore learn it early, practiſe it diligently, and wait upon it habitually and conſtantly. Hear what the prophet ſays in commendation of it, Iſ. xl. 29, 30, 31. "He giveth power to the "faint; and to them that have no might, he increaſeth "ſtrength. Even the youths ſhall faint and be weary, "and the young men ſhall utterly fall. But they that "wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength: they "ſhall mount up with wings as eagles, they ſhall run and "not be weary, and they ſhall walk and not faint."

4. I ſhall conclude the ſubject, by giving you two or three directions for the preſervation and improvement of the ſpiritual life; and particularly for enabling you to perſevere with uniformity and comfort in the exerciſe of prayer.

1. Be watchful and circumspect in the whole of your conversation. Let it be your great aim, to keep consciences void of offence towards God and towards man. Prayer and watchfulness have a reciprocal influence upon one another. Neglect of prayer will make you yield to temptation, and the indulgence of sin will make you afraid to pray. But habitual watchfulness will carry you with comfort to God, at the hour of prayer, both in thankfulness for past mercies, and reliance on him for future strength.

2. Observe with attention the course of his providence towards you. Enumerate his mercies to you in prosperity, adore his righteous will in adversity. Let this be the work, not only of particular seasons, but of every day. This will at once shew you the necessity, and abundantly supply the matter of prayer. If you do otherwise, you will go to prayer without any clear and determinate views of what you are to pray for, and then it is no wonder that it degenerate into a lifeless form. Once more,

3. Be much employed in intercession for others. This noble testimony of Christian love, has the most powerful influence in warming the heart, and enlivening the affections in prayer. It happens frequently, that those who have hardly a word to say for themselves, and whose desires are quite heavy and languid as to what regards their own interest, no sooner come to supplicate for others, than they are enabled to pour out their whole souls before God with the greatest fulness of expression, and enlargement of affection; as if it were the purpose of God, to invite us to this exercise, by honoring it with a particular mark of his acceptance and approbation. Oh that it would please God to revive among professing Christians a spirit of prayer, that when they cannot unite in sentiment, they may unite in prayer; that when impiety and immorality are bold and insolent, they may oppose them by prayer; and that when they are slandered, insulted, or abused by their enemies, they may find unspeakable comfort in imitating their dying Saviour, loving them that hate them, blessing them that curse them, and praying for them who despite-

fully uſe them and perſecute them. I conclude with the words of the apoſtle Jude, ver. 24, 25. "Now unto him "that is able to keep you from falling, and to preſent you "faultleſs before the preſence of his glory with exceeding "joy, to the only wiſe God, our Saviour, be glory and ma- "jeſty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

OBEDIENCE AND SACRIFICE COMPARED.

A

SERMON.

1 SAMUEL, xv. 22.

Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams.

THAT obedience is due to God from all his intelligent creatures, I ſuppoſe none here preſent will deny. It is the original unchangeable law of creation, which every after diſcovery ſerved not to undetermine, but to ſupport and confirm. It was the religion of man in his primitive ſtate of innocence; and it ſhall be the religion of heaven, when we ſhall ſee our Maker as he is. The very excellence of truth itſelf lies in its influence on holineſs, and the very purpoſe of every ſacred inſtitution is to form our minds to a habit of obedience, and ſubjection to the will of God.

In the mean time it is of the utmoſt moment, that we have clear and juſt conceptions of the nature and principles of obedience, and that we guard againſt the errors that are often committed on this ſubject. Some, from a partial or exceſſive attachment to one branch of duty, are apt to diſparage another; and ſome are apt to make a merit of their zeal and diligence in one duty, as if it would procure indulgence for them in the wilful neglect of another. From the language in the remarkable paſſage of ſcripture which I have choſen for my text, it is plain, that ſacrifices,

or the outward worſhip of God, are ſometimes made a cover for the neglect of obedience. Nor are there wanting other paſſages where complaints are brought againſt the ſame miſtake. On the other hand, this paſſage where the text lies, and another expreſſion akin to it in the goſpel, "I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice," have been groſsly miſapplied, to bring contempt upon every poſitive inſtitution, and even upon the whole exerciſes of piety; and that by ſuch perſons as do very little honor either to themſelves or their opinions, by the perfection of their obedience. I have choſen theſe words, with a view to the information and conviction of both theſe ſorts of perſons, and for the inſtruction and edification of thoſe who deſire to walk in the ſtraight path of duty, without turning to the right hand or to the left. In diſcourſing further upon them, I propoſe,

1. To open a little, and make a few remarks on the hiſtory which gave occaſion to the words of the prophet.

2. To ſhew in what reſpect it is, that obedience is oppoſed and prefered to ſacrifice, or juſtly called *better*, as in the words of the text.

3. In the laſt place, To make ſome application of the ſubject.

I. First, then, I am to open a little, and make a few remarks upon the hiſtory which gave occaſion to the words of the prophet. This will be the more proper, that the ſetting this part of the ſacred ſtory in a clear light, will both afford us ſome excellent inſtructions, and alſo obviate the cavils of unreaſonable men. The people called *Amalekites* were derived, and had their name, from one *Amalek*, the ſon of Eſau's eldeſt ſon Eliphaz, by a concubine, (Gen. xxxvi. 12.) The firſt mention we have made of them as a people, was their being engaged in a very unjuſt war with the children of Iſrael, (Ex. xvii. 8.) This provoked God to determine, or at leaſt upon this occaſion he was pleaſed to intimate, their being devoted to utter deſtruction; as Exod. xvii. 14, 15, 16. "And the Lord "ſaid unto Moſes, Write this for a memorial in a book, "and rehearſe it in the ears of Joſhua: for I will utterly

" put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. " And Moſes built an altar, and called the name of it " Jehovah niſſi. For he ſaid, Becauſe the Lord hath ſworn, " that the Lord will have war with Amalek from genera- " tion to generation."

The injuſtice and impiety of this action of the Amalekites, which provoked God, not only to threaten, but to ſwear their deſtruction, may be learned from the account of this matter given us in Deut. xxv. 17, 18, 19. " Re- " member what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when " ye were come forth out of Egypt: how he met thee by " the way, and ſmote the hindmoſt of thee, even all that " were feeble behind thee, when thou waſt faint and wea- " ry; and he feared not God. Therefore it ſhall be, when " the Lord thy God hath given thee reſt from all thine ene- " mies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God " giveth thee for an inheritance to poſſeſs it, that thou " ſhalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under " heaven; thou ſhalt not forget it." From this it appears, that the Amalekites attacked the Iſraelites unprovoked, and without any cauſe; for the Iſraelites neither intended to poſſeſs themſelves of their country, nor were they ſo much as paſſing by their borders, which might have given them ſome cauſe of ſuſpicion. Without any thing of this ſort, they came out of their own country, to attack the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, either in conſequence of the old grudge between Eſau and Jacob, or from a principle of covetouſneſs, to ſeize upon the riches which they heard the children of Iſrael had brought out of Egypt.

It is further obſerved, that they cut off thoſe that were faint and weary, when the diſtreſſed condition of that people ſeemed rather to call for compaſſion and help. This was unjuſt and cruel; and diſcovers them to have been a ſavage and profligate people; eſpecially if one circumſtance more be taken notice of, that they did all this in open defiance and contempt of God. They had no doubt heard, that he intereſted himſelf in a particular manner in the preſervation of the Iſraelites, and was, in a literal ſenſe, their king and governor; and therefore it is ſaid particularly, ver. 18. of the laſt cited paſſage, that the

Amalekites " feared not God." Is there any thing abſurd or unſuitable to the majeſty of the King of kings, in his declaring he would have war with ſuch a people from generation to generation, and at laſt deſtroy them, as he certainly foreknew that they would not grow better, but worſe and worſe ?

Let us not omit to obſerve the long-ſuffering and patience of God. It was not till ſome hundreds of years afterwards, that orders were iſſued out to put the ſentence in execution againſt that people, when they had filled up the meaſure of their iniquities, and were ripe for judgment. This appears evidently from the hints of their character given in the chapter where the text lies. They are called, verſe 18. " the ſinners the Amalekites," by way of emphaſis, to ſhew, that they were eminently wicked above all other people. It is no leſs evident, that their king that ruled over them was a bloody cruel man, from the words of Samuel to him, ver. 33. " As thy ſword hath " made women childleſs, ſo ſhall thy mother be childleſs " among women." Theſe circumſtances make it highly probable, that this prince and his people were commonly employed in the trade of war, in plundering and murdering ſuch of their neighbors as they were able to ſubdue. Now, how groundleſs are all the tragical outcries of unbelievers againſt this part of the hiſtory of the Bible ! Is not God the ſupreme diſpoſer of every event ? Is not the fate of nations decided by his righteous will ? Is he not known by the exerciſe of this his holy prerogative, " Vengeance " is mine ; I will repay ?" It is inconteſtable, from many undoubted facts in the hiſtory of Providence, that " verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." Oh ! that this were conſidered in time by many who are bold enough to impeach the conduct of their Maker, to whom one part of the character of the Amalekites ſeems very applicable, " They fear not God."

It will perhaps be expected, that I ſhould take particular notice of that part of the command given to Saul to deſtroy the " infants and ſucklings," together with thoſe who were come to age. On this you may obſerve, that it was no more than the exerciſe of that abſolute right which

God hath to the lives of all his creatures. He gave them at his pleasure, and he may recall them whenever he will. Those who offer this objection against the scripture history, do not seem to consider, that it militates equally against the daily and visible course of Providence. How many infants do we see daily carried off by the diseases incident to that state? Do not the half of mankind die before they grow up to the years of reason? Does this happen without the foreknowledge and Providence of God? or dare any charge him with being unjust in this part of his will? If we dare not presume to go so far, then, the commanding the children to be cut off by the hand of man, is a mere circumstance, that cannot alter the nature of the decree. The sovereignty of God appears in the clearest manner from the whole of his written word, and from what happens every day before our eyes. Instead, therefore, of raising presumptuous objections against such instances as this referred to in the text, it would be far more just, as well as dutiful, to infer from them, that we are "conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity;" that we lie under an universal forfeiture of life, and therefore a righteous God may execute it upon us at whatever time, and in whatever manner, it seems good unto himself.

I might also observe, that if we consider the circumstances in which these Amalekite children were, from the character of their parents, we shall see, in the conduct of God towards them, a mixture of mercy with judgment. I have already observed, from the sacred history, what wicked persons the Amalekites were. Now, supposing their children left to be trained up by their parents, the presumption is, that they would have been formed by their pernicious example, to murder and rapine, and all sorts of wickedness; and, in particular, to a hatred of the people and God of Israel. This would have rendered their condition infinitely more miserable than we can possibly suppose it by their being cut off in infancy, before the commission of actual guilt. Have we not every day before our eyes examples of persons living and dying in sin, to whom it would have been a great mercy if their eyes, as soon as ever they saw the light, had been closed up in everlasting

darkneſs? Upon the whole, we have reaſon to be fully ſatisfied on every ſuch queſtion as this, by reſolving it into the ſovereignty of God; but I have ſhortly mentioned this partiaular to ſhow how incapable we are of forming a proper judgment of the procedure of Divine Providence; and that the order to deſtroy "both man and woman, in-"fant and ſuckling," when given by the Lord of nature, hath nothing in it either unjuſt or unmerciful.

This awful command was given to Saul, the king of Iſrael; which he, being fully ſatisfied of its coming from God, prepared himſelf to execute. But he and the people, from a principle of covetouſneſs, reſerved what was moſt valuable of the effects of the Amalekites for their own uſe, in direct contradiction to the command of God, who had ordered the cattle and ſubſtance of that people alſo to be deſtroyed. This was probably done to ſhow, that their puniſhment was an act of pure juſtice, without any intention to enrich his inheritance by it. When the prophet Samuel challenged Saul for his diſobedience, he endeavors to cover his conduct by a pretext of religion, verſe 15. "And Saul ſaid,——The people ſpared the beſt of the "ſheep, and of the oxen, to ſacrifice unto the Lord thy "God; and the reſt we have utterly deſtroyed." To this my text is the anſwer, made by Samuel, in the name of the Lord: "And Samuel ſaid, Hath the Lord as great de-"light in burnt-offerings and ſacrifices, as in obeying the "voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey, is better than ſa-"crifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams."

Before I proceed to the *ſecond* general head, I will make a few obſervations on this piece of hiſtory, for your inſtruction.

1. How eaſily are people miſled into diſobedience by their preſent intereſt, or carnal inclinations! how ready are theſe to mix themſelves in all our actions, and to turn what was intended as an inſtance of obedience, into an act of impiety and tranſgreſſion! The children of Iſrael would not deſtroy the goodly ſubſtance of the Amalekites, according to the expreſs command of God, that they might have it to themſelves; though it is remarkable, that they do not appear from the hiſtory to have made any difficulty

in executing what was by far the hardeſt part of the command, *viz.* the ſlaying of man and woman, infant and ſuckling, that fell into their hands. Agag indeed, and him only, they excepted, perhaps to grace their triumph, or from ſome other ſelfiſh motive. Intereſt ſeems to have prevailed here; but there are other paſſions alſo which too often mix themſelves with our religion. Malice and anger, for example, and a deſire of revenge, are often ſeen to intermingle themſelves with our zeal for the glory of God, and convert one of the moſt amiable virtues into a deteſtable crime.

2. You may obſerve how natural it is for people, when challenged for any fault, to lay the blame of it upon others, even when there is little proſpect of hiding their own guilt. "But the people," ſays Saul, ver. 21. "took of the ſpoil, "ſheep and oxen, the chief of the things which ſhould "have been utterly deſtroyed." Whereas, though no doubt they were alſo in the fault, he was much more guilty than they. He had received the particular command from God: he was king and leader of the people, and ought to have reſtrained them from acting contrary to the divine purpoſe. This, however, he was ſo far from ſo much as attempting, that he is ſpoken of as conſenting to, and a chief actor in the offence, ver. 9. "But Saul and the peo- "ple ſpared Agag, and the beſt of the ſheep, and of the "oxen." This diſpoſition ſeems to be as old as ſin itſelf; for we ſee it in the caſe of Adam, after eating the forbidden fruit: Gen. iii. 11, 12. "Haſt thou eaten of the tree "whereof I commanded thee that thou ſhouldſt not eat? "And the man ſaid, The woman whom thou gaveſt to "be with me, ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat." We ought to be humbled for it, as a part of the corruption of our nature, which is not only prone to the commiſſion of ſin, but backward to repentance or confeſſion.

3. We may ſee it is no unuſual thing for men to imagine they have been obedient to God even in that very action by which they have in a remarkable manner ſhown their diſobedience. This was plainly the caſe with Saul, whom we find maintaining and inſiſting upon his innocence, ver. 20. "And Saul ſaid unto Samuel, Yea, I

" have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the " way which the Lord ſent me, and have brought Agag " the king of Amalek, and have utterly deſtroyed the " Amalekites." Where ever any duty, in its ſubſtance, in its circumſtances, or even in its principle, varies from the rules laid down for it in the word of God, it is eſſentially defective; and where the fault is capital, it becometh a ſin. This, I believe, will be always found to be the caſe where merit is pleaded from human performances. True obedience is always humble, and ſenſible of the imperfections attending it. Oſtentatious obedience, if it were for no other reaſon, is an abomination in the ſight of God.

4. How often does it happen, that the excuſes for ſin are the aggravations of it! It ſeemed to Saul, that he had fully juſtified his conduct by ſaying, that he ſpared of the beſt of the ſpoil, to ſacrifice unto the Lord. If there was no ſuch thing in his or the people's mind, when they departed from their commiſſion, then it was a fearful aggravation of his ſin, to add to it the guilt of falſehood and hypocriſy; nor did it ſeem to want impiety, to pretend to offer ſacrifices from the accurſed ſubſtance of that devoted race. If, on the other hand, they really from the beginning intended to preſent a part of the ſpoil as a ſacrifice to God, it ſhows the great deceitfulneſs of ſin, which ſuggeſted this unholy compoſition, and made them think, that their diſobedience might be atoned for by a gift at the alter. Many like inſtances might be given, in which the excuſes for ſin are an addition to the guilt. There are not wanting ſome who, either in a doubtful or explicit manner, would lay the blame of their ſins upon their Maker, and impute to the influence of his providence what belongs to the freedom of their own wills. At the ſame time, it is very remarkable, though melancholy to reflect upon, that thoſe excuſes for ſin which carry in them the moſt daring profanity, are commonly moſt ſtupifying to the conſcience. Such is the ſtate of all thoſe who fortify themſelves in an evil practice, by embracing looſe principles, who, having firſt given way to unbridled inclination in the breach of God's laws, ſteel themſelves againſt conviction and repentance, by a denial of his truth.

5. How great is the folly of men who hope to atone for their diſobedience by any compenſation, but particularly by religious rites! Saul and his people, whatever were their views at firſt, ſeem to have hoped that they might eſcape the puniſhment of diſobedience by offering ſacrifices. There ſeems to have been a tendency to this among the Jews, in general, in after times; and it is the miſtaken hope of hypocrites in every age. But how manifeſt is the error! how groſs is the deluſion! Sacrifices, and all acts of worſhip, derive their very beauty and excellence from the diſpoſition of the worſhipper. Solomon tells us, Prov. xv. 8. "The ſacrifice of the wicked is an "abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright "is his delight." How abſurd and contradictory, how diſhonorable to God, is it, for the ſame perſon to be a zealous worſhipper and a wicked liver, a man fervent in prayer and deceitful in dealing, heavenly in his language and ſenſual in his heart! One would think the dreadful inconſiſtency of ſuch a conduct would alarm the moſt drowſy conſcience; but God, in righteous judgment, gives up to a ſpirit of ſlumber, that they may be the ſtandard of puniſhment for the greateſt ſinners, who ſhall be appointed their portion "with hypocrites and unbelievers, in the "lake that burns with fire and brimſtone for evermore."

II. I PROCEED to the *ſecond* thing propoſed; which was, To ſhow in what reſpects it is that obedience is oppoſed and preferred to ſacrifice, or juſtly called *better*, as in the words of the text. It is not uncommon to hear this paſſage produced in order to prove the value of moral above poſitive precepts. Moral precepts, I ſuppoſe you know, are precepts of perpetual and unchangeable obligation; and poſitive, ſuch as either have not, or do not ſeem to have, any intrinſic excellence in themſelves, but depend upon the immediate and expreſs inſtitution of God. Now though, no doubt, if it is done with proper care, and upon legitimate principles, a diſtinction may be ſtated between theſe different kinds of duties: yet it is plain, that this cannot be the ſpirit of the paſſage before us. There needs no more to ſatisfy us of this, than to reflect upon the

hiſtory illuſtrated above, which gave occaſion to the words of the prophet. That command of God, for diſobedience to which Saul was ſo ſeverely reproved, and afterwards ſo ſignally puniſhed, was ſo far from being in itſelf a moral duty antecedent to the command, that it was not merely a poſitive, but an occaſional and temporary duty; nay without the expreſs appointment and authority of God, it would have been an atrocious crime, *viz.* "Utterly de- "ſtroying the Amalekites, man and woman, infant and "ſuckling." We have not therefore the leaſt encouragement from this example to make light of any command that is ſupported by the inſtitution and authority of God. Well then, may it be ſaid, were not ſacrifices inſtituted by him? and how does the prophet affirm in this paſſage, that "obedience is better than ſacrifice?" For illuſtrating this, and at the ſame time guarding it againſt perverſion and abuſe, I intreat your attention to the following obſervations.

1. Obedience is preferred to ſacrifices as they were uncommanded, free, and voluntary. If we attend to the ſacrifices under the law, we ſhall find them of different kinds; particularly, we ſhall find them diſtinguiſhed in this reſpect, that ſome of them were expreſsly and poſitively ordained, and others were left to the good-will or ſpontaneous inclination of the offerer. The firſt were binding upon the whole of that people in the ſtrongeſt manner, and could not be diſpenſed with; the other were left to themſelves, as the occaſion ſhould point out the propriety, and the piety or gratitude of their hearts ſhould diſpoſe to the performance. It would be a great miſtake to ſuppoſe, that the appointed ſervice of the ſanctuary might be omitted or altered by any human prudence, or diſpenſed with, even under pretence of obedience to the moral law. The obſervation of the ſabbath, of circumciſion, of the paſſover, the daily burnt-offering, the annual ſacrifice on the great day of expiation, the treſpaſs-offering, and many others, were ſo indiſpenſibly neceſſary, that no oppoſition was to be preſumed or imagined between them and the moral law. Nay, the whole circumſtances of theſe rites were preciſely ſpecified, and thoſe who varied any thing

in the manner of their obſervation were to be cut off from their people. For this ſee Exodus xii. 19.: xxxi. 14. and many other paſſages. I muſt further obſerve, that even with reſpect to voluntary or free-will offerings, though they were left at liberty whether they would offer ſuch at all or not; yet if they did offer, the manner in which it behoved to be conducted, was appointed preciſely, and they were forbidden to depart from it, under the ſame awful ſanction. You may ſee the rules laid down for peace-offerings in the 2d and 3d chapters of Leviticus; and for the danger of any error in attending on them, ſee Lev. vii. 20, 21.; Lev. xvii. 8, 9. Now, nothing can be more plain, than that the ſacrifices which Saul and his people had in view to offer, or at leaſt pretended to have had in view, were voluntary or free-will offerings: they were no part of the regular, ſtated, unalterable ſervice of the ſanctuary; but might be offered or not as they themſelves thought proper. When you remember this, my brethren, you will ſee with how great juſtice and force the prophet oppoſes ſacrifices of this kind, to obeying the voice of the Lord: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-"offerings, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" As if he had ſaid, Can you imagine that God will be as well pleaſed with gifts of your own deviſing, as with a ſtrict and punctual execution of the orders which himſelf had given; eſpecially when the very ſacrifices you would offer to him, are purchaſed by the breach of his own expreſs command?

The words of the text having been ſpoken by the Old-Teſtament prophet, and in language directly ſuited to the circumſtances of that diſpenſation, I have kept the laws of the Moſaic œconomy cloſely in view. The ſpirit however of the whole, and the truth reſulting from it, belongs as clearly and ſenſibly to us as to the fathers. We are not to preſume to make light of any inſtitution of God, though, either in whole or in part, of a poſitive nature. But conſidering ſacrifices as including all acts of worſhip, nay all acts of religion or ſervice to God, of whatever kind, ſo far as they are voluntary in their circumſtances, let us not think to put them in the room of obedience to his law. If any man, from this paſſage of ſcripture, ſhall take liberty to deſpiſe the ſabbath, to forbear prayer in ſe-

cret and in family, to neglect the ſacraments or inſtituted worſhip of God, he perverteth and wreſteth the ſcriptures, to his own deſtruction. On the other hand, if any perſon, under pretence of extraordinary prayer, ſhall neglect his calling, if he ſhall put voluntary faſts and bodily mortification in the room of repentance, if he ſhall make donations to the poor, or to ſacred uſes, inſtead of paying his juſt debts, to the prejudice of others, it may, with great propriety, be ſaid to him in the words of Samuel, "Hath the "Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings, as in obeying "the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey, is better than "ſacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams."

2. Obedience is oppoſed to ſacrifices as they are falſe and hypocritical. Even in thoſe ſacrifices that were moſt expreſsly appointed, and of the moſt indiſpenſible obligation, there might be an eſſential defect, from the inward diſpoſition not correſponding to the outward action. Reaſon, as well as ſcripture, teacheth us, that in all acts of worſhip, the ſincerity of the heart makes the chief ingredient. It is the prerogative, and the glory of God, that he ſearcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. Therefore, in every part of his ſervice, he requires integrity and uprightneſs of heart: "He deſireth "truth in the inward parts." That I may treat this part of the ſubject with the greater diſtinctneſs, you may obſerve, that our ſacrifices or worſhip may be polluted by a two-fold hypocriſy. Theſe may be called, hypocriſy towards God, and hypocriſy towards man; or, in other words, inconſiſtency or unſoundneſs in the character, and diſguiſe or inſincerity in the act of worſhip.

(1) Our ſacrifices may be polluted by inconſiſtency or unſoundneſs in the character. This is the caſe where men are careful in attending upon the inſtitutions of religion, but do not make conſcience of keeping the commandments of God in their ordinary converſation; when they are punctual in the outward performance of the duties of the firſt table of the law, but are under no reſtraint as to ſins againſt the ſecond; but, in a particular manner, when they are under the unhappy deluſion of imagining, that the one will make atonement for the other. I believe

it will be found, that this is the meaning of many paſſages of ſcripture, where ſacrifices are ſpoken of with diſregard. The word of God could never be ſo inconſiſtent with itſelf, as to condemn them ſimply, while the law concerning them ſtood in force; but when they were offered by wicked men, when they were reſted on as the whole of religion, or made to compenſate for the neglect of moral duties, then they are ſpoken of with abhorrence: Hoſea vi. 6. "For I deſired mercy, and not ſacrifice; and the "knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings. But "they like men have tranſgreſſed the covenant: there "have they dealt treacherouſly againſt me." Iſ. i. 10. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear "unto the law of your God, ye people of Gomorrah. To "what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices unto me? "ſaith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, "and the fat of fed beaſts, and I delight not in the blood of "bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come "to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand "to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations, in"cenſe is an abomination unto me, the new-moons and "ſabbaths, the calling of aſſemblies, I cannot away with, "it is iniquity, even the ſolemn meeting. Your new"moons, and your appointed feaſts, my ſoul hateth: they "are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. And "when ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes "from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will "not hear: your hands are full of blood. Waſh ye, "make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from "before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek "judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, "plead for the widow." Pſal. l. 16. "Unto the wicked "God ſaith, What haſt thou to do to declare my ſtatutes, "or that thou ſhouldſt take my covenant in thy mouth?" Amos v. 21,—24. "I hate, I deſpiſe your feaſt-days, "and I will not ſmell in your ſolemn aſſemblies. Though "ye offer me burnt-offerings, and your meat-offerings, "I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace"offerings of your fat beaſts. Take thou away from me "the noiſe of thy ſongs, for I will not hear the melody of

" thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and " righteouſneſs as a mighty ſtream."

Indeed, my brethren, what can be more abominable, than the worſhip of ſuch perſons as live in the habitual indulgence of ſin? what more provoking to God? what more preſumptuous in the ſinner? And who can ſufficiently wonder at the blindneſs of all of this character? That their very acceſs to God, which ſhould increaſe their abhorrence of ſin, ſhould, notwithſtanding, ſet them at eaſe in the commiſſion of it? Will he bear more in you, think you, than in others? He will bear leſs. He will viſit you ſooner in his providence, and he will puniſh you heavier to all eternity. Things are quite oppoſite to what you ſuppoſe. Inſtead of your duties rendering your ſins pardonable, your ſins render your duties inſupportable.

(2) The other kind of hypocriſy is, when men put on religion as a cloak and covering on their wickedneſs, and, without any inward regard or ſenſe of duty to God, aim only at the praiſe of men. This is, if poſſible, more daring and preſumptuous than the other, or rather is a more advanced ſtage of the ſame character. It was for this that our Saviour ſo ſeverely reprehended the Phariſees: Matth. vi. 1, 2. " Take heed that ye do not your alms before " men, to be ſeen of them: otherwiſe ye have no reward " of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when " thou doſt thine alms, do not ſound a trumpet before " thee, as the hypocrites do, in the ſynagogues, and in the " ſtreets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I ſay " unto you, they have their reward." And ver. 5. " And " when thou prayeſt, thou ſhalt not be as the hypocrites are: " for they love to pray ſtanding in the ſynagogues, and in " the corners of the ſtreets, that they may be ſeen of men. " Verily I ſay unto you, they have their reward." But truly this is not all. Some are not ſatisfied with doing things in themſelves praiſe-worthy from oſtentation, or the hope of applauſe from men, but they endeavor, by their ſhining and burning zeal in ſuch things, to blind the eyes of others, and hinder them from diſcovering and puniſhing their ſecret wickedneſs: Matth. xxiii. 14. " Wo " unto you, ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye de-

" your widows houſes, and for a pretence make long pray-
" ers ; therefore ye ſhall receive the greater damna-
tion." Whenever this is the caſe, it is no wonder that obedience ſhould be preferred before ſacrifice, and indeed ſet in oppoſition to it. You ſee, however, that this is no more than what our Saviour ſays of almſgiving, which is ſo eminent a moral duty, but which can never find acceptance with God, when done merely from a principle of oſtentation. It is impoſſible, upon the whole, to ſet this matter in a juſter light than our Saviour has done, in ſpeaking of the ſame Phariſees, Matth. xxiii. 23. " Wo unto you, ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites ;
" for ye pay tithe of mint and anniſe, and cummin, and
" have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment,
" mercy, and faith : theſe ought ye to have done, and not
" to leave the other undone."

3. Obedience is oppoſed to ſacrifices, as they are *dead* and *formal*. I am not at this time to mention all the ends which an infinitely wiſe God intended to ſerve by the appointment of ſacrifices : but every one muſt be ſenſible, that they could be of no avail without taking in the principle from which they were brought, and the temper and diſpoſition of the offerer. There was no doubt very much of outward form in the Moſaic œconomy ; and the ritual practices bore ſo great bulk in it, that, by way of compariſon with the ſpirituality of the goſpel, it is called the *law of a carnal commandment*. But it would be miſtaking it very much to ſuppoſe that God was fully ſatisfied with, or deſired that his people ſhould reſt in the outward form. This is plain from many paſſages of ſcripture. What an example of fervor and elevation of ſpirit have we in the exerciſe and language of the Pſalmiſt David, through the whole of his writings ! You may ſee, Pſ. v. 7. " But as
" for me, I will come into thy houſe in the multitude of
" thy mercy : and in thy fear will I worſhip toward thy
" holy temple." Pſ. xxvi. 6, " I will waſh my hands in
" innocency : ſo will I compaſs thine altar, O Lord."
To this you may add what he ſays, Pſal. li. 16, 17. " For
" thou deſireſt not ſacrifice, elſe would I give it : thou
" delighteſt not in burnt-offering. The ſacrifices of God

" are a broken ſpirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O " God, thou wilt not deſpiſe."

In oppoſition to this, however clear a dictate, both of reaſon and ſcripture, it ſeems to have been the diſeaſe of ancient times, to imagine, that the ſacrifices were ſome how neceſſary or uſeful to their Maker in themſelves; and that he was pleaſed with the poſſeſſion of the gift, independent of the diſpoſition of the giver. This led both Jews and Gentiles to ſuppoſe, that the more numerous and coſtly the victims, the greater would be their influence: Micah vi. 6. " Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, " and bow myſelf before the high God? Shall I come " before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year " old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, " or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my " firſt born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for " the ſin of my ſoul?" To ſuch an exceſſive height did this error proceed, that on extraordinary occaſions the Heathens of many different nations offered human ſacrifices, and endeavored, by their number, their youth, or the high rank of their parents, to increaſe their value in the ſight of God. In oppoſition to this groſs deluſion, God often aſſerts his all-ſufficiency, as well as ſovereignty; as particularly in that admirable paſſage, Pſ. l. 7.——14. " Hear, O my people, and I will ſpeak; O Iſrael, and I " will teſtify againſt thee: I am God, even thy God. I " will not reprove thee for thy ſacrifices, or thy burnt-of- " ferings, to have been continually before me. I will " take no bullock out of thy houſe, nor he-goats out of " thy folds. For every beaſt of the foreſt is mine, and the " cattle upon a thouſand hills. I know all the fowls of " the mountains; and the wild beaſts of the field are " mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the " world is mine, and the fullneſs thereof. Will I eat " the fleſh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer " unto God thankſgiving, and pay thy vows unto the " Moſt High." And even with regard to their ordinary attendance on inſtruction, he ſays, Ezekiel xxxiii. 31. " And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and " they ſit before thee as my people, and they hear thy

" words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth " they ſhew much love, but their heart goeth after their " covetouſneſs."

This conduct, ſo diſhonorable to God, and ſo inconſiſtent with the holineſs and purity of his nature, had no ſufficient excuſe either among Jews or Heathens. But ſurely it is ſtill more criminal among Chriſtians. The goſpel, as a diſpenſation of clearer light, and greater purity, is called *the miniſtration of the Spirit*. And in oppoſition to all ceremonial and local worſhip, our Saviour ſays, John iv. 23, 24. " But the hour cometh, and now " is, when the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father " in ſpirit and in truth; for the Father ſeeketh ſuch to " worſhip him. God is a ſpirit; and they that worſhip " him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth." But are there not ſome amongſt us who may be juſtly charged with guilt in this reſpect? or rather, who is there amongſt us that does not in ſome degree fall under the reproof? Are there not ſome who reſt in the form of worſhip, and are ſtrangers to the ſpirit of it? Are there not ſome who value and truſt in their forms while they are regardleſs of the ſpirit? Nay, are there not ſome who not only ſubmit to, but are pleaſed with the form, and yet have no reliſh for that nearneſs to God, and ſenſe of his preſence, which conſtitutes the ſpirit of worſhip? How many ſinful motives may bring us to the houſe of God! If you come to avoid the reproach of men, is that a real ſacrifice to God? If you come from oſtentation, to be ſeen of men, is that an offering acceptable to God? If you come to gratify your fancy, by hearing the performance of man, you are offering the incenſe to the creature that is due only to God. Conſider further, how often we may be ſinfully employed in the houſe of God. Are careleſs inattentive perſons offering acceptable ſacrifices to God? Are thoſe who indulge vain, proud, ſenſual, covetous thoughts in worſhip, offering ſacrifice to God? Are thoſe who come to cenſure or admire the ſpeaker, offering ſacrifice to God? In all ſuch caſes, without any diſparagement to the holieſt inſtitutions of God, or rather from a juſt concern to defend them from profanation, we may ſay, in the words of the

text, "Behold, to obey, is better than ſacrifice; and to "hearken, than the fat of rams."

4. In the *laſt* place, obedience is oppoſed to ſacrifices as they are miſplaced and unſeaſonable. In the ancient diſpenſation, time and place were as much aſcertained as any circumſtance that belonged to the temple-ſervice; and nothing could be more contrary to the ſpirit of that œconomy, than taking any liberty with the order which God himſelf had eſtabliſhed. There are ſeveral inſtances of heavy judgments denounced againſt princes, whoſe chief fault ſeems to have been, offering the appointed ſacrifices in forbidden places, or at improper ſeaſons. If, therefore, he would not ſuffer any variation in circumſtances which he had preſcribed, how could Saul ſuppoſe, that he would accept of a ſacrifice in the place of a duty which he had commanded? It is alſo to be obſerved, that the duties of the moral law are perpetually binding; and therefore, when in Providence any example of them occurs, ſtrengthened with the urgent call of neceſſity and mercy, they become exceptions to an ordinance of a poſitive nature. Thus our Saviour does not contradict the law of Moſes in what he teaches concerning the Sabbath; but ſhows in what manner that command was, or ought always to have been underſtood by the Jews themſelves. See an inſtance of this, Luke xiii. 14, 15, 16. "And the ruler of the "ſynagogue anſwered with indignation, becauſe that Jeſus "had healed on the Sabbath-day, and ſaid unto the people, "There are ſix days in which men ought to work; in "them therefore come, and be healed, and not on the "Sabbath-day. The Lord then anſwered him, and ſaid, "Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sab-"bath looſe his ox, or his aſs, from the ſtall, and lead him "away to watering? And ought not this woman, being "a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo "theſe eighteen years, be looſed from this bond on the "Sabbath-day?" See alſo two other examples of the ſame thing, in the 12th chapter of the goſpel according to Matthew; in ſupport of which our Lord cites a paſſage from the Old Teſtament, ver. 7. "But if ye had known what

" this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice, ye " would not have condemned the guiltleſs."

The ſame general rule is to be obſerved at all times. We muſt attend to the intimations of Providence, and as far as they can be clearly diſcerned, diſcharge thoſe duties to which we are immediately called. Every thing is beautiful in its place and ſeaſon, and is then not only moſt acceptable to God, but moſt uſeful to men. It is ſo far from being any diſparagement of ſacrifices, that it is their very excellence, to be confined to their time and place. And the maxim in the text will apply with equal propriety to every duty of the moral law. The moſt excellent of them may be miſapplied. True religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is, to viſit the fatherleſs and the widow; and yet, if the time of divine worſhip be unneceſſarily choſen for that purpoſe, or if too much time be conſumed in it by thoſe whoſe preſence cannot be uſeful, it is a rejected ſacrifice. Feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, is the character that ſhall meet with the approbation of our final judge; and yet, if any ſhall, out of oſtentation, feed the poor abroad, and ſtarve their families at home, or perform this duty at the expence of any other more immediately binding, he falls under the condemnation of the prophet in the text: " Behold, to obey, " is better than ſacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of " rams." To conclude this head, we ſhall greatly miſinterpret this paſſage of ſcripture, if we pretend to honor one part of religion to the prejudice of another. The ſacrifices condemned by the prophet are not to be underſtood of poſitive duties, as oppoſed to moral, nor of acts of worſhip, as oppoſed to the duties of the ſecond table; but of every act of religion, however excellent in itſelf, or neceſſary in its place, if it is done from an ill principle, with a ſinful purpoſe, in a ſinful manner, or ſubſtituted in the room of that which God in his Providence doth immediately require.

III. I PROCEED now to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1. From what hath been ſaid, you may learn what are the great characters of acceptable obedience; and, I think, they may be reduced to the three following. 1. It muſt be implicit obedience. It muſt be founded immediately and directly on the authority of God. We muſt not take upon us to judge of the moment and importance of any part of his will, further than he hath made it known himſelf. It is a very dangerous thing for us to make compariſons between one duty and another, eſpecially with a view of diſpenſing with any of them, or altering their order, and ſubſtituting one in another's place. 2. A ſecond character of true obedience is, that it be ſelf-denied and impartial, that it be not directed or qualified by our preſent intereſt. It was the beſt of the ſpoil that Saul and the people ſaved; that which was vile and refuſe, they utterly deſtroyed. It is too common, that our own intereſt both points out the object, and aſſigns the meaſure of our obedience; and in that caſe, it does not deſerve the name of obedience to God at all. But when the Chriſtian is devoted to God, ready at his call, and equally diſpoſed to any employment aſſigned him in Providence, he then may be ſaid indeed to do his will. 3. A third character of obedience is, that it be univerſal, without any exception. Saul, and the children of Iſrael, had complied ſo far with the order given them, that the greateſt part both of the people and ſubſtance of Amalek was deſtroyed; but he ſtopped ſhort, and knowingly left unfiniſhed what had been injoined him by the ſame authority.

2. From what hath been ſaid on this ſubject, you may ſee, that the true notion of obedience is inconſiſtent with the notion of merit, as if we could lay our Maker under ſome ſort of obligation. This is as fatal and dangerous an error as any whatever, to think we may merit at the hand of God, and yet very common. Nay, it ſeems to be natural to us all, with great difficulty reſtrained, and never in this life wholly overcome. You ſee how Saul juſtified himſelf, and ſaid, "Yea, but I have obeyed the voice of "the Lord." But, in the judgment of God, there was no conſideration had of what he had done, but a ſevere

ſentence of condemnation upon him for what he had neglected. True obedience is always conſidered, in this light, as a debt due to God, for the performance of which nothing can be claimed, but for the neglect of which a penalty is incurred. I wiſh this were properly attended to. The guilt of tranſgreſſion is plainly inconſiſtent with the merit of obedience. If we are liable to puniſhment for not obeying, the right of our Maker to our ſervice muſt be complete, there is no room to plead any merit in compliance, and the reward muſt be of grace, and not of debt. Thus, I think, it is always felt by good men; and the more that they are devoted to God, they are the leſs diſpoſed to avail themſelves of any thing they have done, and the more inclined to aſk forgiveneſs for what hath been either omitted, or ill done.

3. From what hath been ſaid, you may learn the great defects of our obedience in general. If we conſider the characters of true obedience, implicit, impartial, and univerſal, we muſt be ſenſible what great blemiſhes attend every act of duty to God which we perform. We, ſhall always find ſomething amiſs, either in its extent, its principle, or its end. What reaſon this for humliiation? what a powerful argument to every Chriſtian to live a life of continual dependence on divine ſtrength to enable him to obey, and divine mercy to accept of his imperfect obedience? Nothing but great ignorance of themſelves, or great inattention to what paſſes in their own hearts, can embolden men to put confidence in themſelves. And indeed their doing ſo is commonly attended with very mortifying effects. When God leaves them, in fatherly diſpleaſure, to prove and try them, or when he leaves ſinners to themſelves, to fill up the meaſure of their iniquities, it ſoon affords a ſatisfying proof, that in us, that is, in our fleſh, dwelleth no good thing. To will may be preſent with us, but to do that which is good, we find not.

4. In the *laſt* place, Suffer me earneſtly to exhort you to make it your daily ſtudy, not only to keep the commandments of God, but to take particular notice from what principle your obedience flows. See how much there is in it of ſelf-denial of devotedneſs to God, of ſubjection to his providence. One act of ſilent ſubmiſſion, or

a quiet application to thoſe duties that are immediately neceſſary, though neither eaſy nor honorable, is of much more value, than a long tract of activity and zeal in a public and viſible ſphere of action, ſweetened by reputation and applauſe. As the ſubmiſſive Chriſtian lives upon the Creator alone, independent of the creature: ſo the obedient Chriſtian ſerves his God and Redeemer alone, without paying any regard to the eſteem or approbation of his fellow-ſinners. In this way only is your obedience given to God, and in this way only will you find it pleaſant or profitable to yourſelves. If you keep clearly and cloſely to the command of God, and have not ſo much as any other deſire, or inclination, than to know what it is, you will hardly ever be miſtaken. But if you allow other motives to have place, if you take upon you to judge of what is moſt proper or expedient, or even practicable, you will pollute every part of your duty, and find yourſelves often involved in impenetrable darkneſs. If what is duty be the inquiry, and intereſt ſet a ſide, if duty be the object of your attention, and events left to God, you will find unſpeakable conſolation from it in the mean time, as well as the ſucceſs more effectually ſecured than it could poſſibly have been by any anxiety or foreſight of your own. Let God then have the unadulterated obedience of all his creatures; and let us aſk of him, according to his promiſe, "to work in us to will and to do of his good pleaſure."

THE SECURITY OF THOSE WHO TRUST IN GOD.

A

SERMON.

PROV. xviii. 10.

The NAME *of the* LORD *is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*

THIS book of Proverbs conſiſts almoſt entirely of obſervations upon human life. The characters and purſuits of men are deſcribed in it with a ſtrength and propriety, which was never exceeded by thoſe who devoted their whole attention to the ſtudy of what is called the knowledge of the world and of mankind. But in one particular it differs from, and excels all human learning, that it never ſeparates the knowledge of the world from the knowledge of him who made and who governs it. There we are taught to improve the leſſons we receive in the courſe of providence, for leading us to obedience and ſubmiſſion to him, "who doth according to his will in the "army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; "and none can ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him, what doſt "thou?" There, while a view is given us of the innumerable paths which men have ſtruck out for themſelves in travelling through life, our eyes are continually directed to the paths of righteouſneſs, the ſure and only way to reſt and peace.

Experience alone, and unaſſiſted, will make us wiſer in one ſenſe, will ſhow us many of the unavoidable calamities of life; but the greateſt exertion of human reaſon could never yet lead to an effectual cure. I believe it

will be found, that perſons of the greateſt vigor and reſolution of mind, when they truſted to their own internal ſtrength, and ſought a reſource in themſelves for the evils with which they were aſſaulted, have often run headlong into the moſt furious and deſperate courſes, as ſome of the ſtrongeſt animals, when taken in a ſnare, do, by their violent ſtruggles, entangle themſelves the more, drawing the cords which bind them ſtill more ſtrait, and increaſe their confinement by their endeavors to eſcape.

The wiſe man, in our text, points out what is the refuge and ſecurity of every child of God. *The name of the Lord is a ſtrong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is ſafe.* And he certainly intends to ſet this in oppoſition to every thing elſe in which worldly men might place their dependence; for he adds, as an example, in the verſe following the text, "The rich man's wealth is "his ſtrong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit." The truth conveyed to us in this paſſage has an intimate connection with practical and experimental religion; and on a firm belief and habitual application of it, in a great meaſure, depends the comfort and peace of the ſervants of God. In diſcourſing on it, I ſhall endeavor, in divine ſtrength,

I. To explain what is to be underſtood by *the* NAME *of the* LORD.

II. What is implied in the *righteous running into it as a ſtrong tower.*

III. Point out the ſecurity they attain by doing ſo.

And, in the laſt place, I ſhall make ſome application of the ſubject.

I. Then, I am to explain what is to be underſtood by *the* NAME *of the* LORD. And here, I hope, I need ſcarce obſerve, that it was by no means the intention of the Spirit of God, by this expreſſion, to teach us to conceive any particular virtue or charm in the name literally ſo called; that is, the ſound or pronunciation of the word. To imagine any thing of this kind, would be to go into the foolery and idle dreams of ſuperſtition, to which there is not the leaſt countenance given in the holy Scriptures. Hu-

man nature ſeems, however, to have been very prone to this in every age. The uſe of amulets and charms ſeems to have prevailed in the greateſt part of the heathen nations, as alſo magical incantations, though it did not exert itſelf preciſely in the ſame way, the principle ſeems to have been the ſame, which led the Jews from a pretended veneration for the name *Jehovah*, never to pronounce it at all; a cuſtom which they retain to this day, alledging, either that they cannot pronounce it, or that it is unlawful to utter it. We may alſo obſerve, that, in our neighbor church, they ſeem to have fallen into the ſame error in the cuſtom of bowing at the name of Jeſus, while they do not bow to the names of Chriſt, Lord, or God.

Having mentioned theſe things for the illuſtration of the ſubject before us, I cannot help obſerving, that if a ſuperſtitious veneration for the letters or the ſound of a name, is blame-worthy, a raſh profanation of the name of God is unſpeakably more criminal. My heart bleeds to think of the commonneſs of this ſin among all ranks and all ages. What have thoſe parents to anſwer for, who have taught, or who have not reſtrained their children from taking the name of God in vain? This is a ſin little thought of among men, but highly criminal in the ſight of God, and he hath taken to himſelf the work of avenging it: "For the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs who taketh "his name in vain."

By the NAME *of the* LORD, in our text, we are to underſtand the Lord God himſelf; his nature as it is diſcovered to us in all his glorious perfections, particularly his power and goodneſs, to ſave and deliver them that put their truſt in him. In this ſenſe the name of God, or the name of the Lord, is uſed in many paſſages of Scripture, as Pſal. xx. 1, 5, 7, verſes, "The Lord hear thee in the day of "trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee. We "will rejoice in thy ſalvation, and in the name of our "God we will ſet up our banners.—Some truſt in chariots, "and ſome in horſes; but we will remember the name of "the Lord our God." As alſo in all thoſe places where mention is made of calling on the name of the Lord, or praiſing the name of the Lord. Agreeably to this, we find, in

our Saviour's directory for prayer, the following petition, *Hallowed be thy name*; that is, let God himself, and his glorious perfections be acknowledged, and a suitable regard paid to them, by all without exception. The same way of speaking is observed with respect to Christ, Acts iv. 12. "For "there is none other name, under heaven, given among "men, whereby we must be saved." That is to say, there is no other Saviour, besides Christ, to whom we can flee for deliverance from guilt and misery. At the same time, it is easy to see the propriety of this expression, *the name of the Lord*; it is used for God himself, because, amongst mankind, we are distinguished from one another by our names, so God is known or distinguished by the discoveries he hath made of himself, and the daily exercise of his perfections, in behalf of his people.

There are three principal ways by which God hath discovered himself to mankind; namely, the visible creation, his written word, and the daily administration of his providence. Let us consider them shortly, as they may be justly said to be his name; for they serve to explain his nature.

1. Let us consider the visible creation as the name of God. He hath engraven his name on all the works of his hands; he hath engraven it in an universal language, in which every intelligent creature may read it, and the most weak and ignorant may easily comprehend it. Psal. xix. 1. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament "sheweth his handy works.' Rom. i. 20. "For the invisi- "ble things of him, from the creation of the world, are "clearly seen; being understood by the things that are "made, even his eternal power and Godhead."

Are men ignorant of God? It is because they do not like to retain him in their knowledge; for the whole creation is full of him, 'He is not far from every one of us.' We can no where turn our eyes, to the heavens above, or to the earth below, but we may see the most manifest proofs of his almighty power, his unsearchable wisdom, his unbounded goodness, and his universal presence. How feeling a sense of this does the Psalmist express, Psal. cxxxix. 1—7. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.

" Thou knoweſt my down-ſitting and mine up-riſing, thou " underſtandeſt my thought afar off. Thou compaſſeſt my " path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all " my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but " lo, O Lord, thou knoweſt it all together. Thou haſt be- " ſet me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. " Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I " cannot attain unto it. Whither ſhall I go from thy ſpi- " rit? or whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence?" It will fall more properly under the following head to ſhew, how *the righteous run into the name of God as a ſtrong tower.* We now conſider only his works as ſhewing forth his glory. See, to this purpoſe, the fortieth chapter of Iſaiah, from the 12th verſe and downwards. " Who hath mea- " ſured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted " out heaven with a ſpan, and comprehended the duſt of " the earth in a meaſure, and weighed the mountains " in ſcales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath direct- " ed the ſpirit of the Lord; or being his counſellor, hath " taught him? With whom took he counſel, and who " inſtructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, " and taught him knowledge, and ſhewed him the way of " underſtanding?"

2. God hath revealed himſelf in his written word; there he hath clearly and explicitly written his name, and revealed his nature; there all his various perfections, excellent in themſelves and ſuitable to us, are enumerated and explained: in theſe lively oracles, there is a remedy not for the uncertainty of nature's light, but for the darkneſs of our bewildered underſtandings. Here we muſt not forget that he hath in his word clearly revealed himſelf, as infinitely gracious to ſinners through Jeſus Chriſt. This may well be called his name, becauſe it is the only way by which we are brought to an intereſt in his favor. John xiv. 6. " I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No " man cometh unto the Father but by me." This unlocks the gates of the ſtrong tower, and opens a ſanctuary to the ſinner, who is fleeing from the ſword of avenging wrath. " No man hath ſeen God at any time; the only begotten " Son, which is in the boſom of the Father, he hath de-

" clared him." His name and memorial to all generations, is ſaid to " be gracious and merciful, ſlow to an- " ger, and of great kindneſs, and repenteth him of the evil." And it is in Chriſt Jeſus, and his croſs, that his mercy is diſplayed; it is for Chriſt's ſake that his mercy is beſtowed; it is by Chriſt Jeſus that every mercy is diſpenſed: therefore we may apply to this ſubject, the prophecy of Chriſt in Pſal. xxii. 22. " I will declare thy name unto " my brethren; in the midſt of the congregation will I " praiſe thee."

3. In the laſt place, God reveals his name in the daily adminiſtration of his providence. In this, I include not only what regards the ſupport and preſervation of natural life, but all the methods of his grace. The one and the other of theſe give us a continual and ſenſible diſplay of the nature and glory of God. What the works of nature teach us to infer by reaſon what the holy ſcriptures teach us by information concerning God, the adminiſtration of Providence, gives us an opportunity of ſeeing and feeling in our own experience. The appearances of God in Providence, and his gracious interpoſition in behalf of his own people, are expreſſed by his name's being near, or his name's being made great, Pſal. lxxv. 1. " Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks; unto thee do " we give thanks; for that thy name is near, thy won- " drous works declare. Pſal. lxxvi. 1. In Judah is God " known, his name is great in Iſrael."

An experimental knowledge of the power and mercy of God, is, of all others, the moſt complete and effectual. To this we may well apply the words of Job, xlii. 5, 6. " I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now " mine eye ſeeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and re- " pent in duſt and aſhes." It is alſo probable, that the Pſalmiſt David often affixes this particular meaning to the knowledge of God's name, as in Pſal. ix. 10. " And " they that know thy name will put their truſt in thee; for " thou, Lord, haſt not forſaken them that ſeek thee." For the ſame reaſon he recommends a careful obſervation of Providence, as an excellent mean of being partakers of divine mercy. Pſal. cvii. 42, 43. " The righteous ſhall " ſee it and rejoice, and all iniquity ſhall ſtop her mouth.

" Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things, even " they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord."

I ſhall conclude this head, by an earneſt exhortation to every one in this aſſembly, to endeavor to underſtand more and more of the name of God, as it appears in his works, in his word, and in his providence. Has he written it in ſo great a variety of characters, and will you not take the pains to obſerve it? O the ſottiſh folly of worldly men! their curioſity is inſatiable to hear things of no moment, while they cannot be perſuaded to hear what regards their own eternal ſtate. They will run in crouds to ſee every idle or pernicious ſight, if it be called rare, while they will not open their eyes on the magnificence and glory of their Creator's works.

But let me in a particular manner, beg of you, the careful obſervation of Divine Providence, towards yourſelves in particular. You will find the unſpeakable advantage of it. It will make God more preſent with you than ever. It will ſet home the obligation of every duty, and the enormity of every ſin upon the conſcience, in a manner far more forcible than ever. It will alſo give every mercy a richneſs and value, which it could not derive from any other ſource; juſt as the man who has been fed at a diſtance, by the ſtreams of a prince's bounty, would feel his heart drawn with far ſtronger bonds of love and gratitude, were he to be brought into his preſence, and receive his favors immediately from his own hand.

I am aware of an objection againſt this. Perhaps ſome perſons will ſay, how can I make a particular application of Providence? how can I certainly know the voice or meaning of every event that befals myſelf or my family? is there not a great danger of running into viſionary folly and enthuſiaſm? In the remaining part of this ſubject, I ſhall have occaſion to ſay more as to the meaning of Providence. In the mean time, let me only deſire you to begin by a perſonal application of the unqueſtionable truths concerning Providence, and this will lead you farther than you apprehend, without the leaſt danger of miſtake. Is it not certain, that " a ſparrow falleth not to the " ground without your heavenly Father, and that the very

" hairs of your head are all numbered by him." Is it not of the Lord's mercy then, that you awakened this morning, and did not ſleep the ſleep of death? If you had done ſo, were you ready for it? Do you know how, when, or how ſoon it may be ſo? Were you engaged in any ſcene of intemperance, lewdneſs, debauchery? would that have been a proper ſcene for death? Have you been preſerved from any imminent danger, recovered from any threatening diſorder? Is not that a mercy? Has the deſire of your eyes been taken away by a ſtroke? Have you heard the reproach of many on every ſide? Is not this the will of God? Whether does it call for patience or pride? Have you ſuffered in your ſubſtance? Whether does this teach you to love the world or to deſpiſe it? Is there any uncertainty here? Believe it, Chriſtians, a perſonal application of the truths relating to Divine Providence, would reveal as it were a new world to you, and would make the paths of God towards you every day more intelligible, every day more profitable, and ſhall I not add, every day more comfortable.

II. We proceed now to the ſecond thing propoſed, viz. what is implied in *the righteous running into the name of the Lord as a strong tower*. The word *tower*, eſpecially when joined with the epithet *strong*, immediately conveys to the mind the idea of protection and defence. It evidently alludes to the ſtate of many ancient nations and tribes, who were continually expoſed to hoſtile inroads and invaſions, and were obliged to have caſtles and towers as places of refuge and ſecurity; and this is far from being an improper image of the ſtate of a child of God in this preſent world, whether we conſider the common calamities to which he is liable as a man, or the peculiar trials with which he may be afflicted as a good man. To have a clear view of the import of the metaphor, we need only conſider ſome parallel places, where we find the ſame expreſſion, and others of the ſame meaning, Pſal. xviii. 2, 3. " The Lord " is my rock and my fortreſs, and my deliverer; my God, " my ſtrength, in whom I will truſt; my buckler, and the " horn of my ſalvation; and my high tower. I will call

" upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praiſed, ſo ſhall I be " ſaved from mine enemies. Pſal. xxvii. 1, 2. The Lord " is my light and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear ? the " Lord is the ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid? " When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, " came upon me, to eat up my fleſh, they ſtumbled and " fell." Pſal. lxi. 2, 3, 4. " From the end of the earth will " I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead " me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou haſt been " a ſhelter for me, and a ſtrong tower from the enemy. I " will abide in thy tabernacle for ever; I will truſt in the " covert of thy wings. Selah." When we hear a good man uſing ſuch expreſſions as theſe, we may gather, with the greateſt certainty and clearneſs, what is the general import of God's being *a ſtrong tower*, namely, that he is a moſt powerful protector; that his almighty Providence is the ſureſt and ſtrongeſt defence againſt all enemies of whatever kind, let their art, their activity, their malignity, be what they will.

Though this may not ſeem to need any further explication; yet, for the aſſiſtance and direction of ſerious perſons, let us conſider a little what is implied in *the righteous running into this tower* for their protection. This is the rather neceſſary, that though it is the privilege, the duty, and the practice of the ſervants of God, to make God their defence and ſtay, yet they may be faulty and defective in this part of their duty, and ſuffer a proportional loſs in point of comfort.

1. Then, *running to the name of God as their ſtrong tower*, implies the lively exerciſe of faith both in the power and willingneſs of God to protect them. It is only by faith that we can go to an inviſible God. As faith muſt be the principle of all acceptable ſervice to God, ſo faith is evidently the immediate mean of all truſt in or enjoyment of God. Therefore it is ſaid, with the greateſt propriety, " the juſt ſhall live by faith."

You may obſerve, I have ſaid the *lively* exerciſe of faith; for, beſides the habitual perſuaſion of the great truths of religion, as the foundation of our adherence to God as our portion, there muſt be an actual contemplation of them as

the mean of our ſupport in trial or deliverance from danger. Whatever be the nature or ſource of temptation, we muſt meet it, as it were, and reſiſt it, by taking ſuitable views of the fulneſs and all-ſufficiency of God. Does the believer ſtand in need of any thing ſpiritual or temporal? is he diſtreſſed with the want of it? does he ſee no human or probable way of his being ſupplied with it? He *runs to the name of God as his strong tower*, by conſidering, that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof:" that his wiſdom is infinite; and that, if it is really neceſſary, he can eaſily find a way of beſtowing it. Pſal. xxxiv. 9, 10. "O fear the Lord ye his ſaints; for there is no want to "them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and ſuf- "fer hunger: but they that ſeek the Lord ſhall not want "any good thing." He dwells upon the univerſal preſence and the ſpecial providence of God, and endeavors to reaſon down his anxiety and fear. Perhaps he may do it in the words of our bleſſed Saviour, Matth. vi. 25. to the 33. verſe, "Therefore, I ſay unto you, take no thought "for your life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink, "nor yet for your body what ye ſhall put on; is not the "life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Be- "hold the fowls of the air; for they ſow not, neither do "they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly "Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than "they? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one "cubit unto his ſtature? And why take ye thought for "raiment? Conſider the lilies of the field, how they "grow; they toil not, neither do they ſpin: and yet, I "ſay unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was "not arrayed like one of theſe. Wherefore, if God ſo "clothe the graſs of the field, which to-day is, and to-mor- "row is caſt into the oven, ſhall he not much more clothe "you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, ſaying, "what ſhall we eat? or what ſhall we drink? or where- "withal ſhall we be clothed? (For after all theſe things "do the Gentiles ſeek;) for your heavenly Father know- "eth that ye have need of all theſe things.

Is the believer diſtreſſed with enemies, malicious, powerful, implacable? does he ſuffer, or is he afraid of ſuffer-

ing from them, in his name, in his perſon, in his life itſelf? he conſiders the power of God to ſhield him from their attacks, or more than compenſate all the injuries which he may receive from them, and ſtrengthen and animate him to a vigorous diſcharge of his duty in oppoſition to them. Pſal. iii. 5, 6, 7, 8. "I laid me down and ſlept, "I awaked; for the Lord ſuſtained me: I will not be a- "fraid of ten thouſands of people that have ſet themſelves "againſt me round about. Ariſe, O Lord; ſave me O "my God; for thou haſt ſmitten all mine enemies upon "the cheek-bone; thou haſt broken the teeth of the ungod- "ly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; thy bleſſing is "upon thy people, Selah." He endeavors to deliver himſelf from the diſtreſſing fear of man, by the reaſonable and dutiful fear of offending God, Luke, xii. 4, 6. "And "I ſay unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that "kill the body, and after that have no more that they can "do. But I will forewarn you whom you ſhall fear: Fear "him, which after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into "hell, yea, I ſay unto you, fear him." Dan. iii. 16,17, 18. "Shadrach, Meſhech, and Abednego, anſwered, and ſaid to "the king, O Nebuchadnezzar! we are not careful to an- "ſwer thee in this matter. If it be ſo, our God, whom "we ſerve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery fur- "nace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King! "But, if not, be it known unto thee, O King! that we will "not ſerve thy gods, nor worſhip the golden image which "thou haſt ſet up."

Is the believer afraid of the ordinary evils of life? is he of a timorous nature, trembling at the thoughts of the accidents that may befal him? he runs to the name of God as the ſupreme diſpoſer of every event, and thinks of the inviſible power that governs and directs all viſible things, and that the very miniſters of providence have received a charge concerning all his people: Pſal. xci. 1,—12. "He "that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the Moſt High ſhall "abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty. I will ſay of "the Lord, he is my refuge, and my fortreſs; my God, "in him will truſt. Surely he ſhall deliver thee from "the ſnare of the fowler, and from the noiſome peſtilence,

" He ſhall cover thee with his feathers; and under his " wings ſhalt thou truſt. His truth ſhall be thy ſhield and " buckler. Thou ſhalt not be afraid for the terror by night, " nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the peſti- " lence that walketh in darkneſs; nor for the deſtruction " that waſteth at noon-day. A thouſand ſhall fall at thy " ſide, and ten thouſand at thy right hand; but it ſhall " not come nigh thee: only with thine eyes ſhalt thou " behold, and ſee the reward of the wicked, becauſe thou " haſt made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Moſt " High, thy habitation. There ſhall no evil befal thee, " neither ſhall any plague come nigh thy dwelling: for " he ſhall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee, " in all thy ways."

To the power I joined the willingneſs of God to preſerve and protect his people, on their ſincere and humble application to him for it. This is abſolutely neceſſary as a part of the object of faith. It would be in vain to run to any ſtrong place, with a view of being preſerved from our enemies, unleſs we have ſome ground to hope we ſhall be received into; and it would be madneſs to flee to a fortreſs kept by an enemy; but God is every righteous man's friend: all the divine perfections are engaged for his welfare: and therefore he may confidently run to God from every danger, and be aſſured both of a kind welcome, and of all that ſafety which is neceſſary for him.

Faith, in this reſpect, has an immediate relation to the promiſes of God. It is his name, as I obſerved on a former head, to which we are to flee, as revealed in his written word; and much of the life of practical religion conſiſts in attending to the tenor, and in a daily application of the promiſes. God himſelf requires us to call upon him in a time of trouble, Pſal. l. 15. " And call upon me in the day of " trouble; I will deliver thee; and thou ſhalt glorify me." Nay, he is graciouſly pleaſed to reckon our calling upon him an eſſential character of his own people, Zech. xiii. 9. " And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will " refine them as ſilver is refined, and will try them as gold " is tried; they ſhall call on my name, and I will hear " them; I will ſay, it is my people; and they ſhall ſay,

" the Lord is my God." He is pleaſed to eſteem this, as giving him the glory of his truth and faithfulneſs, wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, which we find repreſented in ſcripture as ſo many chambers of protection into which the righteous are called to enter for ſafety and preſervation, Iſa. xxvi. 20. " Come, my people, enter thou into thy " chambers, and ſhut thy doors about thee ; hide thyſelf as " it were for a little moment, until the indignation be " overpaſt."

I ſhall only further obſerve that faith in both theſe reſpects, as applying the power and promiſe of God, receives very much ſtrength from the examples of his mercy, either towards ourſelves or others. His name is recorded in every page of the hiſtory of Providence. And his people cannot, in a more proper or effectual manner, run into it as a *ſtrong tower*, than by conſidering and weighing the examples of divine interpoſition, in behalf of his faithful ſervants. For this reaſon, is ſo great a part of the holy Scriptures hiſtorical ; becauſe they ſerve, in a more effectual manner, to engrave the truths of religion both on the memory and heart. Many can remember what befel Abraham, David, Samuel, Daniel, and others, who would forget the precepts delivered them in a more abſtract manner. And every one muſt be ſenſible, that the inſtructions which ariſe clearly and obviouſly from hiſtorical facts, come home upon the conſcience with a degree of evidence, ſuperior to any thing that flows merely from the deductions of reaſon. May not the Chriſtian, with great advantage, ſay, " Do I not ſerve an everlaſting and un- " changeable God ? Is he not the ſame yeſterday, to-day, " and forever ? Is his hand at all ſhortened, that it can- " not ſave ; or his ear heavy, that it cannot hear ? Is not " he who ſaved David the ſtripling, from the ſtrength of " Goliah ; who ſaved Daniel from the power of the lions ; " and in many other inſtances, aſſiſted or delivered his " own people, when employed in his ſervice, able to ſave " me from the power of the enemy, and to carry me " through all the trials of this earthly ſtate, whether they " ariſe from temptation or ſuffering ?" I hope I need not tell you to apply, in the ſame manner, all that you have

learned of the wiſdom or goodneſs of Providence, from reading or converſation. For this reaſon, the Pſalmiſt declares his reſolution of communicating the mercy of God to his ſoul, Pſal. lxvi. 16. "Come and hear, all ye that "fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my "ſoul."

Suffer me here to ſay, that I cannot ſee a ſhadow of reaſon why Chriſtians ſhould not imitate the Pſalmiſt's example, in imparting their experience of divine grace, for their mutual inſtruction and conſolation. If the ſtudent will communicate his intellectual diſcoveries; if the naturaliſt will communicate his facts and obſervations; if the tradeſman will communicate his attainment in his profeſſion; if no man ſcruples to communicate what he hath known to be uſeful, for the health of the body; tell me, ye ſcorners, what ſhould hinder the Chriſtian to communicate to his fellow-ſervants, what may ſerve for their ſpiritual conſolation and peace?

But if our mutual experience may be ſerviceable to each other, how much more muſt the paſt goodneſs of God towards themſelves, encourage his children to put their truſt in him? How juſt and beautiful the Pſalmiſt's reflection, Pſal. lxiii. 7. "Becauſe thou haſt been my help; "therefore in the ſhadow of thy wings will I rejoice." In the ſame manner he recovers from his doubts and fears, Pſal. lxxvii. 5,—12. "I have conſidered the days of old, "the years of ancient times; I call to remembrance my "ſong in the night; I commune with mine own heart, "and my ſpirit made diligent ſearch. Will the Lord caſt "off for ever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his "mercy clean gone forever? doth his promiſe fail for ever"more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in "anger ſhut up his tender mercies? Selah. And I ſaid, "this is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the "right hand of the Moſt High. I will remember the works "of the Lord, ſurely I will remember thy wonders of old."

Thus, my brethren, the believer runs, by faith, *into the name of God as his ſtrong tower;* and as he who once gets into what he thinks an impregnable fortreſs, will ſpeak to his enemies in the language of diſdain and defi-

ance; ſo he who hath repoſed his confidence in an almighty Protector, may tread upon the necks of his enemies; may be confident, that through God he ſhall do valiantly. Neither is it any fable, but matter of certain experience, that many "through faith have ſubdued "kingdoms; wrought righteouſneſs: obtained promiſes; "ſtopped the mouths of lions; quenched the violence of "fire; eſcaped the edge of the ſword; out of weakneſs "were made ſtrong; waxed valiant in fight; turned to "flight the armies of the aliens." Heb. xi. 33, 34.

2. *The righteous runneth into the name of God as a ſtrong tower* by the exerciſe of fervent prayer. Prayer is the immediate and direct means of imploring the divine aſſiſtance and protection. Faith is the habitual principle, and prayer is the actual application of it. Many are the precepts in Scripture enjoining the diligent exerciſe of this duty. Col. iv. 2. "Continue in prayer, and watch in "the ſame with thankſgiving." 1 Theſ. v. 17. "Pray "without ceaſing." Many are the promiſes of a gracious anſwer to our prayers. Matt. vii. 7. "Aſk, and it ſhall "be given you; ſeek and ye ſhall find; knock, and it "ſhall be opened unto you."—xxi. 22. "And all things "whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer, believing, ye ſhall re-"ceive." John xiv. 13. "And whatſoever ye ſhall aſk "in my name, that will I do; that the Father may be "glorified in the Son." There are alſo exhortations to importunity in prayer. Luke xviii. 1. "And he ſpake a "parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always "to pray, and not to faint." Many aſſurances of the ſucceſs of prayer. Pſal. xxxiv. 6, 17. "This poor man "cried, and the Lord heard him, and ſaved him out of all "his troubles. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, "and delivereth them out of all their troubles." Many examples of the power and efficacy of prayer, as in Jacob, David, Daniel.—It ſeems plainly an eſſential character of true piety, to be given to prayer. Pſal. cix. 4. "For my "love they are my adverſaries, but I gave myſelf unto "prayer." I forbear enlarging on theſe particularly, and ſhall only ſay, that it is quite neceſſary, in order to our *running into the name of God as a ſtrong tower*. Though

he knoweth all our wants perfectly, he requires that we implore his affiſtance by prayer. Phil. 4, 6. " Be careful " for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and ſupplica- " tion, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known " unto God."

The truth is, prayer is the natural remedy to which all are ready to fly in extremity. Even bad men are diſpoſed to cry unto God in great diſtreſs, but his own children are more habitually exerciſed to the duty, and as they only do it on proper principles, and with proper diſpoſitions, ſo they only have the promiſe of acceptance, and ſucceſs. Jam. v. 16. " The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous " man availeth much."

3. In the laſt place, *The righteous runneth into the name of God as a ſtrong tower*, by diligence in his duty. This alſo is neceſſary and inſeparable from a child of God, and in order to take a diſtinct view of the Chriſtian's diligence, in this particular light, as the foundation of truſt, you may obſerve, that it implies theſe following things. 1. Diligence in all duties in general; in order to aſcertain his character, and to be aſſured of the divine favor and protection, the promiſes of deliverance, of ſtrength and preſervation, are all made to thoſe who ſerve God in ſincerity. There is no ſuch thing as a promiſe in any part of ſcripture to a bad man, as ſuch. There are alſo the moſt poſitive and gracious aſſurances of powerful ſupport in ſuffering, and all neceſſary help to thoſe who truly fear God, Iſa. xliii. 1, 2. " But now, thus ſaith the Lord, that " created thee, O Jacob! and he that formed thee, O Iſ- " rael! Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have call- " ed thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou paſſeſt " through the waters, I will be with thee; and through " the rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee. When thou " walkeſt through the fire, thou ſhalt not be burnt; neither " ſhall the flame kindle upon thee." Nay, the moſt expreſs declarations, that all things ſhall iſſue to their advantage, however diſcouraging an aſpect they may wear for a ſeaſon. Rom. viii. 28. " And we know, that all things " work together for good, to them that love God, to them " who are the called according to his purpoſe." From

this it plainly follows, that the very way to run into the name of God, is, by habitual diligence in doing his will. The more we can, by walking in his fear, keep clear our title to his ſpecial favor, the more unſhaken truſt and confidence we may place in his power and mercy, in every trial; for he hath not forſaken them that love him. So certain is this, that I believe every experienced Chriſtian will bear teſtimony, that when he is unhinged by diſtreſs, when he is filled with anxiety, and fear of any kind, it ariſes as much, or more, from ſuſpicion of himſelf, and doubt of his relation to God, as from any diſbelief of the general truth, that God will ſupport and ſtrengthen his own people. Therefore the righteous may be ſaid to *run into the name of God*, when they exerciſe themſelves in keeping conſciences void of offence, and walk ſo as they may humbly hope for his acceptance and approbation.

2. As a good man runs into his ſtrong tower, by diligence in every part of his duty in general; ſo particularly by a watchful attention to his conduct, in every time of trial or danger. He will be on his guard, leſt by any part of his behaviour he provoke God to depart from him. He will then, in a peculiar manner, ſet the Lord before him, that he may, with the greater confidence, commit his cauſe and his intereſt to his care. The ſuffering diſciples of Chriſt are often warned of the neceſſity of this. 1 Pet. iv. 19. "Therefore, let them that ſuffer, according to "the will of God, commit the keeping of their ſouls to "him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." Whether therefore the danger ariſes from bodily diſtreſs, from worldly loſſes, from ſlander and reproach, or from whatever other quarter, the firſt and great care of the Chriſtian ſhould be, to keep his conſcience undefiled; and the neceſſity of this is the greater, that ſuffering times are always times of trial. It is no eaſy matter to reſiſt the temptations which ariſe from a ſuffering ſtate, ordained expreſsly for the trial of our faith, which we are told, is "more pre-"cious than that of gold which periſheth." We may be tempted to impatience under calamity, to reſentment of injuries, to taking wrong and ſinful methods of redreſs. In oppoſition to all theſe, the ſervant of God will be par-

ticularly careful to avoid thoſe ſins which his ſituation invites him to, and to diſcharge thoſe duties which the aſpect of Providence ſeems to aſk of him; he will conſider this as the great and only object of his attention, and freely commit the conduct of events, and the iſſue of things, to an all-gracious, and Almighty God. Pſal. xxxvii. 5, 6. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; truſt alſo in him, and "he ſhall bring it to paſs. And he ſhall bring forth thy "righteouſneſs as the light, and thy judgment as the "noon day.

3. A good man will diligently uſe every lawful mean for his protection and deliverance. This may be conſidered as included under the former particular, being a part of his duty. Truſt in God, is by no means a preſumptuous and ſlothful ſecurity, but a patient dependence on the bleſſing of Providence in an application to our duty. To do otherwiſe, is juſt what is called in ſcripture, *tempting God.* For the wiſeſt purpoſes, God hath fixed and ſettled the relation between the means and the end; and we are not to expect, either in natural or ſpiritual things, to obtain the end, while we deſpiſe the means. Gal. vi. 7. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for "whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap." But,

4. In the laſt place, The good man will renounce all dependence on created help, as ſuch, and place his ultimate hope only on the power and ſovereignty of Divine Providence. He will not neglect the uſe of outward means, in obedience to the command of God, but will look for the expected benefit from them, only by the bleſſing of God. The *running into a strong tower*, implies a renunciation of our dependence on any thing elſe, we give up all other methods of defence, and truſt in it alone for ſecurity. So it is here. There may be not only a dependence on means unlawful in themſelves, but a ſinful, becauſe an exceſſive dependence upon ſuch as are moſt lawful. We ſee this remark made on Aſa. 2 Chron. xvi. 12. "And Aſa, in the thirty and ninth year of his reign, "was diſeaſed in his feet, until his diſeaſe was exceeding "great: Yet in his diſeaſe he ſought not to the Lord, but "to the phyſicians." Many are the evidences we have

from daily experience, of the weakneſs and uncertainty of all outward means, that we may not be tempted to idolize them, or to truſt in them; and we find, in many paſſages of ſcripture, an expreſs oppoſition ſtated between truſt in God, and truſt in human or created help. Pſal. cxviii. 8, 9. "It is better to truſt in the Lord, than to put "confidence in man. It is better to truſt in the Lord, "than to put confidence in princes." Pſalm cxlvi. 3. "Put not your truſt in princes, nor in the ſon of man, in "whom there is no help."

III. We proceed now to the third thing propoſed: which was, to conſider the perfect ſecurity of the righteous, *who runneth into the name of the Lord as a ſtrong tower—the righteous runneth into it, and is ſafe.* And here, my brethren, I cannot help obſerving, that though this is a truth of the moſt manifeſt importance, and, at the ſame time, the moſt undoubted certainty, it is what but few attain to the unſhaken perſuaſion and daily application of, in their paſſage through this vale of tears. In order to illuſtrate it, I ſhall ſhortly conſider, 1ſt, Wherein this ſafety of the righteous conſiſts. 2dly, The abſolute certainty of their being thus preſerved ſafe.

We are told, *the righteous runneth into this tower, and is ſafe.* In a perfect conſiſtence with the uſe of the metaphor, the word might perhaps be better tranſlated, *is exalted*, or *placed on high.* Now, their ſafety, I think, conſiſts in the following particulars. 1. God, many times, by the courſe of his Providence, preſerves them from dangers which they could not otherwiſe eſcape. Every good man, who has attended, if I may ſo ſpeak, to his own hiſtory, muſt have obſerved, that he hath been delivered from danger by ſuch means as were no way the effect of his own prudence or foreſight, nor indeed could be, and which therefore he is conſtrained to aſcribe to the goodneſs, and wiſdom of Providence. Nay, ſometimes things fall out ſo contrary to human expectation, and the ordinary courſe of things, that he is conſtrained, with wonder, to confeſs the very finger of God. He ſometimes blaſts the counſel of the wicked, and makes their devices of none

effect. The Egyptians thought the Iſraelites were ſo incloſed in the Wilderneſs, with the Red Sea before them, and their army at their back, that it was impoſſible for them to eſcape: but God, by a mighty hand, and an outſtretched arm, opened a way for them through the midſt of the waters, and their enemies were drowned in the depths of the ſea. Haman, no doubt, thought his vengeance ſure againſt all the Jews; but, when it was juſt ready to burſt, God turned his deviſes againſt himſelf, and cauſed him to periſh by the very means which he had contrived for the deſtruction of the innocent.

I need not attempt, becauſe indeed it is impoſſible, to enumerate the various ways by which the great Diſpoſer of all things works deliverance in danger. He ſometimes changes the hearts of enemies, as he did of Eſau towards Jacob—and of the Apoſtle Paul, when breathing out threatenings againſt the church—He ſometimes carves out other work for perſecutors, as Saul was once and again called off from the purſuit of David by the Philiſtines; and ſometimes he makes the intended evil prove a real bleſſing; as in the caſe of Joſeph, in whoſe hiſtory we have one of the moſt beautiful draughts of Providence that is any where to be ſeen, and done with that union of majeſty and ſimplicity, which ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhes the ſacred writings. The whole hundred and twenty-fourth Pſalm is a celebration of divine power, and a hymn of praiſe for divine protection. "If it had not been "the Lord, who was on our ſide, now may Iſrael ſay; if "it had not been the Lord, who was on our ſide, when "men roſe up againſt us, then they had ſwallowed us up "quick, when their wrath was kindled againſt us; then "the waters had overwhelmed us, the ſtream had gone "over our ſoul: then the proud waters had gone over "our ſoul. Bleſſed be the Lord, who hath not given us "as a prey to their teeth. Our ſoul is eſcaped as a bird "out of the ſnare of the fowlers: the ſnare is broken, "and we are eſcaped. Our help is in the name of the "Lord, who made heaven and earth."

I ſhall only add, on this head, that a ſerious perſon, when thinking or ſpeaking of deliverance from danger,

will always consider sin as the greatest danger: he will reflect, with the highest pleasure, on the instances in which God has enabled him to discharge his duty with constancy. Let me beg of you to remember, with what courage and resolution the young persons, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego spoke to King Nebuchadnezzar, and resisted the threatenings of that powerful prince. It is worth while to observe, that they and Daniel seem, in that perilous time, to have given themselves much to the exercise of prayer. Thus, *running into the name of God as a strong tower*, they obtained security, while other very eminent persons, by trusting in themselves, or boasting of their own strength, fell before temptations of a very trifling kind, as Abraham and Isaac in denying their wives, and the Apostle Peter in denying his Master.

2. The security of the righteous consists in the promise of strength and support in the time of trial. Although God preserves his people from many dangers, yet he has no where promised them deliverance from all. On the contrary, we are told, "that all that will live godly in "Christ Jesus must suffer persecution; and that through "much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of "God." Yet even in these circumstances, they are safe, because God is with them in their afflictions; his rod and his staff powerfully support them. Need I tell you, that here, in a particular manner, the text is exemplified: *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.* Under a smarting rod, what can a child of God do, but enter into his secret chambers, and supplicate the assistance and presence of his reconciled Father? and has he not promised to grant it? Isa. xliii. 1. "But now, thus saith the Lord, that created thee, O "Jacob! and he that formed thee, O Israel! fear not; "for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy "name; thou art mine." And has he not many times, in fact, granted it? The three children walking at liberty in the midst of the fire with the Son of God, as their companion, was but one instance of what has many times happened in every age. Who would not rather be in the place of Paul and Silas, singing praises to God in their

chains, than be the maſter of the world, with all the danger and anxieties of a throne? Let me here make an obſervation, which I think is warranted both by ſcripture and experience, that juſt as in point of duty, ſo alſo in point of ſuffering, the ſecurity and comfort of the people of God depends upon their running into, and, if I may ſo expreſs it, keeping within the bounds of their ſtrong tower. If they keep cloſe to God, no ſuffering will diſconcert them; no enemy will terrify them: but, if they neglect this, they may be unhinged by a very ſlight trial. I hinted before, ſelf-dependence will make men fall before a very trifling temptation: but dependence on divine ſtrength will make them ſuperior to the greateſt. In the very ſame manner, it hath been often ſeen, that perſons, who have loſt their temper, or loſt their courage, in ſufferings of no extraordinary kind, when more ſeverely tried have behaved infinitely better, and being conſtrained to flee to God for protection, have found ſuch benefit from it, that they have ſlept in peace and comfort in a loathſome priſon, have gone with an undaunted ſtep to an ignominious ſcaffold, nay, and embraced, with joy and tranſport a halter or a ſtake.

3. In the laſt place, The righteous is ſafe under the divine protection, as they are ſure of deliverance in the end, and complete victory over all ſufferings of every kind. Thus it is ſaid, Pſal. xxxiv. 17. to the end.. "The righ-
"teous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them
"out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them
"that are of a broken heart, and ſaveth ſuch as be of a con-
"trite ſpirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous;
"but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keep-
"eth all his bones, not one of them is broken. Evil
"ſhall ſlay the wicked, and they that hate the righteous
"ſhall be deſolate. The Lord redeemeth the ſoul of his
"ſervants; and none of them that truſt in him ſhall be
"deſolate." There is a great beauty in this laſt paſſage, which is loſt or concealed in our tranſlation; it lies in the oppoſition between the 19th and 21ſt verſes. The 19th verſe runs thus, "Many are the afflictions of the righte-
"ous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." In

oppoſition to this, it is ſaid, in the 21ſt verſe, as it ſhould be tranſlated, "One evil ſhall ſlay the wicked; and they "that hate the righteous ſhall be deſolate." This probably points at the great diſtinguiſhing ſecurity of good men, that their ſalvation is ſafe in the keeping of God, and quite beyond the reach of their moſt implacable enemies. Whatever ſtraitening circumſtances they may be reduced to, they have treaſures in heaven, "which neither moth nor "ruſt can corrupt, nor thief break through and ſteal." They may be driven from their habitations, or baniſhed from their country; they may reſemble thoſe of whom we read, Heb. xi. 36, 37, 38. "And others had trials of cruel "mockings, and ſcourgings,; yea moreover of bonds and "impriſonment. They were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſun-"der, were tempted, were ſlain with the ſword; they "wandered about in ſheep ſkins, and goat ſkins; being "deſtitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was "not worthy;) they wandered in deſerts, and in moun-"tains, and in dens, and caves of the earth;" but they cannot be baniſhed from the kingdom of heaven. No tyrant can ſhut the gates of Paradiſe againſt them; for they have been opened by him, "who openeth, and no man "ſhutteth; and ſhutteth, and no man openeth." I have often read with admiration, both in the inſpired writings and eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, the patience and conſtancy of the martyrs. How edifying is it to obſerve, that by witneſſing a good confeſſion, together with the gracious influence of the ſpirit of God, they have become ſuperior to the fear of death, and have been enabled to deſpiſe or pity the weakneſs of perſecuting rage? Sometimes we may clearly ſee, the unrighteous judges torn in pieces, with the fury of infernal paſſions, vainly endeavoring to wreak their malice, by newly invented tortures, and the happy priſoners, as it were, already beyond their reach, while by faith and hope they are firmly aſſured of "an inheritance "incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, "reſerved in heaven above."

Having thus conſidered the nature of the good man's ſecurity, I am now to conſider the abſolute certainty of it. On this I ſhall be very ſhort, it reſts upon the divine per-

fection, the divine promiſe, and the experience of the ſaints. 1. The divine perfection. Is there any thing too hard for the Almighty? Is he not the Lord of nature? And are not all things obedient to his will? The great enemy of ſouls, and all his inſtruments and agents, are under the government of God. He ſets bounds to their rage, and will not ſuffer them to go ſo much as one hairs breadth beyond the limits he hath appointed for them. How great then muſt be the ſecurity of thoſe who put their truſt in him? Again,

2. Conſider his faithful promiſe; he hath ſaid it, he hath repeated it, he hath ſworn it, that his covenant ſhall ſtand faſt for ever. Every page of the ſacred oracles is full of the moſt gracious aſſurances; and theſe expreſſed in the moſt condeſcending terms. Pſalm xci. 1,——4. "He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the Moſt High, "ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty. I will "ſay of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortreſs; my "God, in him will I truſt. Surely he ſhall deliver thee "from the ſnare of the fowler, and from the noiſome peſ- "tilence. He ſhall cover thee with his feathers, and un- "der his wings ſhalt thou truſt: his truth ſhall be thy "ſhield and buckler." Zech. ii. 8. "He that toucheth you, "toucheth the apple of his eye." Nay, the very miniſters of his Providence are your attendants. Pſal. xci. 11. "For "he ſhall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee "in all thy ways."

3. Conſider the experience of the ſaints; they all, with one voice, bear their teſtimony to the divine faithfulneſs and mercy. It is with this particular view that the Pſalmiſt ſays, in that forecited text, Pſal. ix. 10. "And they "that know thy name will put their truſt in thee; for "thou, Lord, haſt not forſaken them that ſeek thee." And indeed in every age, Chriſtians of ſtanding and experience are ready to give their ſanction to the certainty of God's promiſes, and will often confeſs the greatneſs of his paſt mercy, even while they are chiding their own impatience and diſtruſt, that it can ſcarcely ſuffice to embolden them for future duty, and prepare them for future trials.

Here I muſt add, that the believer not only deſires to ſee the glory of God's mercy, in general, as diſplayed in the goſpel, in which he may have a ſhare, but to take an appropriating view of it, as what he hath a clear right and title to call his own. Doubtleſs the mercy of God is publiſhed, offering ſalvation to the chief of ſinners. It is their duty to accept of it; it is their intereſt to cleave to it. But they are many times deterred by what they ſee in God, they are many times diſcouraged by what they feel in themſelves, and are afraid to aſſert their title to ſo great a bleſſing. But when, by the Holy Spirit, they are enabled to ſee the infinite price paid for their redemption, in the croſs of Chriſt; when they ſee the riches of divine grace, in the croſs of Chriſt; when they hear the urgent invitations to them to believe in the croſs of Chriſt; when they are enabled freely to renounce and quit hold of every other claim; when their hearts are ſweetly conſtrained by the bonds of their Redeemer's love; they can then look upon God as their reconciled Father, through him who hath made peace, by the blood of his croſs, and ſay unto him, *My Lord! and my God!* What an endearing view is this of the divine glory, and what ineffable ſatisfaction ſprings from it, to the ſoul? What an unſpeakable conſolation to thoſe who have been wounded in their ſpirits, and grieved in their minds, when they are enabled to apply the encouraging promiſes of the holy ſcriptures? Iſa. i. 18. "Come, now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord; though "your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; "though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool. "Iſa. xliii. 25. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy "tranſgreſſions, for mine own ſake; and will not remem-"ber thy ſins, xliv. 22. I have blotted out, as a thick "cloud, thy tranſgreſſions, and as a cloud thy ſins. Re-"turn unto me, for I have redeemed thee."

3. The believer deſires to ſee the glory of God, as an all-ſufficient God. This is a neceſſary view of God, as the ſupport and happineſs of the creature, as well as the ſtrength and conſolation of the ſinner.

My brethren, man was made for living upon God; forgetting this he firſt went aſtray from him. Self-ſufficiency, and a deluſive ſenſe of independance, is inſeparable

from a ſinful ſtate. Conviction levels a blow at the foundation of this miſtake. Serious conſideration ſhews us how inſufficient we are for our own happineſs. Daily experience diſcovers the inherent vanity of all created comforts in themſelves, and as ſeparated from God. When the penitent returns to God, he not only returns, from the ſervice of other maſters, to him, as his rightful Lord; but forſakes all forbidden joys, and cleaves to God as his happineſs, and reſts in him as his portion. Does not this appear from the uniform language of ſcripture, with regard to both parts of the covenant? what belongs to God, and what belongs to man. See the tenor of an early promiſe to the father of the faithful, Gen. xv. 1. "Fear not "Abram; I am thy ſhield, and thy exceeding great re-"ward." Multitudes of others are of the ſame import.

The power and providence of God, in behalf of his people, are largely and beautifully deſcribed in the ninety firſt Pſalm, "He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the Moſt "High, ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty. I "will ſay of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortreſs; "my God, in him will I truſt. Surely he ſhall deliver "thee from the ſnare of the fowler, and from the noiſome "peſtilence. He ſhall cover thee with his feathers, and "under his wings ſhalt thou truſt. His truth ſhall be thy "ſhield and buckler," &c. 2. Cor. vi. 17. "Wherefore "come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith "the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will re-"ceive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye ſhall be "my ſons and daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty." On the other hand, the invitation, or exhortation to return, is ordinarily preſſed from the profit of the change, Iſa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirſteth! come ye to the waters; "and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea "come, buy wine and milk, without money, and with-"out price." And, to name no more paſſages, when God came to eſtabliſh the faith of Abraham in his promiſe, he ſays, Gen. xvii. 1. "I am the Almighty," or, as it ought "to be tranſlated, the all-ſufficient God: walk before me, "and be thou perfect." Now, believers deſire to ſee the glory of God, as all-ſufficient; and all diſcoveries of this

nature are attended with unſpeakable complacence and ſatisfaction. They ſee the glory of an infinite God as theirs, and rejoice in the richneſs of their portion. Wearied with repeated diſappointments, and deeply convinced of the vanity of the creature, they reſt in him, as able to give them complete happineſs; happineſs that will never change! happineſs that will never be exhauſted; He that hath choſen God as his portion, hath, as our Saviour beautifully expreſſeth it, made "choice of that good part, which "cannot be taken away from him."

My brethren, we are now come to the very ſubſtance of practical religion. The glory of an all ſufficient God, appears as more than a balance to all that pretends to rival him in our affections; to all that we are called to give up for his ſake. When the believer ſees the fulneſs of God, then his anxiety, and diſtreſſing fears, of every kind, are at an end. Does he want proviſion? "The earth is "the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof. The young lions "do lack and ſuffer hunger; but they that ſeek the Lord, "ſhall not want any good thing." Does he want friends? God is able to make his enemies to be at peace with him. Does he want any outward comfort? God is able to procure it, or make him happy without it. Not to mention particulars; the triumph of faith, in this view, is to attain an abſolute and unconditional reſignation to the will of God, with a firm perſuaſion, that he is able to make all things work together for our good, and willing to beſtow every thing that is for our real intereſt. It is to ſay with the prophet, Hab. iii. 17. "Although the fig tree ſhall "not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines, the labor "of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; "the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall "be no herd in the ſtalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, "I will joy in the God of my ſalvation."

I ſhall only add, that the divine all-ſufficiency is to be conſidered, as regarding our ſanctification as well as comfort. What diſtreſs does not the Chriſtian often ſuffer from the treachery of his own heart, and from the power of ſurrounding temptations? Covered with ſhame for his paſt unſtedfaſtneſs, convinced, by experience, of his own

weakneſs, he hath no other refuge but in God. And what courage does he derive from the fulneſs of divine perfection, the greatneſs of divine power and the faithfulneſs of the divine promiſe? "My grace ſhall be ſufficient for "thee, and my ſtrength ſhall be made perfect in weak-"neſs." He then ſays, with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxi. 16. "I will go in the ſtrength of the Lord God: I will make "mention of thy righteouſneſs, even of thine only."

II. I proceed now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And, 1ſt, Let us admire the divine condeſcenſion, in admitting his ſaints to a diſcovery of his glory. Solomon ſays, with very great propriety, in the language of aſtoniſhment: "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" The ſame ought to be, nay, the ſame certainly are, the ſentiments of every real believer. But let us remember what has been hinted at above, that our acceſs to God, and our communion with him, is, and only can be, through the Mediator of the new covenant, in whom we have acceſs, by faith, unto God.

2dly, Let me beſeech you to try yourſelves, whether this ever hath been your attainment, and whether it is your ſincere deſire? Do you know, in any meaſure, what it is to ſee the glory of the true God? Hath he appeared before you in terrible majeſty? Have your very ſouls been made to bow down before him, and to give him the glory that is juſtly due to his name? Have you ſeen the glory of a reconciled God? Have you choſen him, in Chriſt, as your portion? Have you devoted yourſelves, without reſerve, to his diſpoſal? Again, have you ſeen the glory of an all-ſufficient God? Surely I ſpeak to many who have ſeen the vanity of the creature. Probably you have taſted a little of the ſufferings of a ſinful ſtate. Where did you ſeek your conſolation? where do you find your ſupport? Have you learned the holy and happy art of pouring out your ſouls to God? Have you felt the ſweetneſs of it? And have you ſaid, with the Pſalmiſt, "Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul! for the Lord hath "dealt bountifully with thee?" Is it your earneſt deſire

to see the glory of God? Can you say with the Psalmist, Psal. lxiii. 1, 2. "O God! thou art my God, early will "I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth "for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, to "see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in "the sanctuary."

3dly, I will now proceed to exhort you, in the most earnest manner, to diligence in seeking after real communion with God in his instituted worship. How highly are we favored with light and liberty? how little are many sensible of their privileges? I have often, on such occasions, put you in mind of the fatal effects of a heartless, customary, formal worship: it is provoking to God, pernicious to others, hardening to the heart, and ruining to the soul. Were but a society of those Protestants abroad, who are lying under persecution, to enjoy the season which we now enjoy, what an edge would be upon their spirits? what a sense of gratitude in their hearts? what fire and zeal in their affections? Strange, indeed, that public prosperity should be so stupifying, and the approach of eternity to every individual should not be awakening, while the young and strong are hurried off the stage, while every day is bringing us nearer to our last, while every ordinance is adding to our charge, that we should not desire to see the glory of God in his sanctuary here, that it may be the earnest of our future inheritance, and prepare us for his immediate presence hereafter.

Suffer me to speak a few words to those that are young. God is my witness, that their welfare is at my heart. Perhaps you will think, what hath been said hardly applicable to you. The desire of Moses, the man of God, intimate communion and fellowship with God, the attainment of ripe and experienced Christians, all this you will say, is unsuitable to me: nay, perhaps, by a bastard humility, you will say, to expect it, would be presumption in me. But you are greatly deceived: there are none who have more gracious invitations to come unto God than young sinners: there are none who have greater reason to expect nearness to God than young saints. Do you not read, that God revealed himself to Samuel, the child, when

he neglected Eli, the old prophet? Besides, I would recommend earnestness and affection to you; not only for your greater profit, but to prevent your apostasy. A little religion is very hard to hold; it is like a lamp which is hardly lighted, which the least breath of wind will extinguish, or a tree that is but newly planted, which a rude thrust will overturn. Unless you make God, and his service, your hearty choice, you will not carry it long as your burden, but will be soon tempted to throw it down. Be concerned, therefore, I beseech you, to attend on his instituted worship, not in a careless and formal manner, but let the "desire of your souls be to his name, and the "remembrance of him." I shall now conclude the subject, by offering to those, who would see the glory of God, a few directions, as to the best preparation for such a discovery. 1st, If you would see the glory of God in his sanctuary, be serious in self-examination, and in the renunciation of all known sin. Holiness is an essential attribute of the divine nature; and, therefore, he must be worshipped in the beauty of holiness. Thus the Psalmist resolved with himself, Psal. xxvi. 6. "I will wash mine hands in "innocence, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord!" It is true, none, who have any knowledge of the corruption of their own hearts, can reasonably hope to be perfectly free from sin in the present life: yet a real Christian will have it, as the object of his daily study, to "cleanse himself "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, that he may per-"fect holiness in the fear of God." It was sin that first rendered us unfit for communion with God; and, therefore, our recovery of this happy privilege will be but in proportion to our sanctification. To bring sinful dispositions, indulged, and still suffered in the heart, to the worship of God, and to expect acceptance in a such state, is implied blasphemy, and the greatest dishonor we can possibly do to him.

2. In order to see the glory of God, you must be clothed with humility. No disposition more essentially necessary to a Christian at all times, but more especially, when he makes an immediate approach to God in his worship: Isa. lxvi. 2. "For all those things hath mine hand made: "and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to

" this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of " a contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word." And, indeed, how can we conſider the nature of that God whom we worſhip, and our own ſinful and miſerable eſtate, without being ſtruck with a ſenſe of the neceſſity of deep humility and ſelf-abaſement in our intercourſe with him? It is particularly to be noticed, that ſelf-abaſement, and even ſelf-abhorrence, is the immediate effect of a ſenſe of the divine preſence. See to this purpoſe, Iſa. vi. 1, —5. " In the year that King Uzziah died, I ſaw alſo " the Lord ſitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and " his train filled the temple: above it ſtood the ſeraphims: " each one had ſix wings: with twain he covered his face, " and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did " fly. And one cried unto another, and ſaid Holy, holy, " holy is the Lord of hoſts, the whole earth is full of his " glory! And the poſts of the door moved at the voice " of him that cried, and the houſe was filled with ſmoke. " Then ſaid I, Wo is me; for I am undone, becauſe I " am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midſt of " a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have ſeen the " King, the Lord of hoſts!" See alſo Job xlii. 5, 6. " I " have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now " mine eye ſeeth thee: wherefore I abhor myſelf, and re- " pent in duſt and aſhes." Let us endeavor, therefore, to be truly and inwardly humble. Let us remember the grace of redemption, what guilty criminals we were, before unmerited mercy and ſovereign love found out a way for our recovery. Happy they, where humility ariſes from a real exerciſe of ſoul! How difficult, how rare a thing, is true humility? How eaſy is it to uſe modeſt and ſubmiſſive expreſſions, compared to attaining a truly humble and mortified ſtate of mind? May almighty God, by his power, make us humble; and do thou, O bleſſed Jeſus! " caſt down every high thought, and lofty imagina- " tion, that exalteth itſelf againſt thee."

3. In the laſt place; if you deſire to ſee the glory of God, be fervent in preparatory prayer: if there is any bleſſing that requires importunity and wreſtling with God, ſurely this high and happy privilege of communion with

him in his houſe muſt be of that kind. And, I think, we are warranted to ſay, that, in the divine government, there are ſome bleſſings that require more importunity than others. See a remarkable paſſage, Mark ix. 28, 29. "And when he was come into the houſe, his diſciples "aſked him privately, why could not we caſt him out? "and he ſaid unto them, this kind can come forth by no- "thing, but by prayer and faſting." If ſome devils were ſo obſtinate in their poſſeſſion, that the ſame degree of faith and fervor, which prevailed over others, could not caſt them out, muſt not the ſame thing hold, from analogy, with reſpect to other mercies? And how juſtly are indifferent, luke-warm worſhippers denied that bleſſing which they ſo lightly eſteem? Let me therefore, earneſtly, beſeech every ſerious perſon not to reſtrain prayer before God, but to repeat, and urge the plea, that he would be graciouſly preſent with us; that he would pour down his Spirit from on high, and make us to know, to our happy experience, "that a day in his courts is better than a "thouſand; and that it is better to be door-keepers in the "houſe of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedneſs."

IV. I come now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And, firſt, From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee the ſinfulneſs of diſtruſt. Has God laid ſo noble a foundation for our dependence upon him; and are we ſtill ſo backward to the duty? Is not diſtruſt in ſome meaſure a denial of God himſelf? A denial of his preſence, a denial of his perfections, and diſbelief of his promiſes? Let us all be covered with ſhame, when we conſider how much we have already diſhonored him, in this reſpect. And let us pray, that he may enable us henceforward not only to ſend up our cries to heaven, for relief in diſtreſs, but to caſt our cares and burdens upon the Lord, in the faith "that he "will ſuſtain us, that he will never ſuffer the righteous to "be moved."

2. You may ſee the remedy of diſtruſt, which is, to be more and more acquainted with the name of God. Contemplate his glory in the viſible creation: he may be ſeen not only in his ſpreading out the Heavens like a curtain, but in the formation of the meaneſt creature; in a pile of graſs, or in a grain of ſand. While you are daily taſting his gifts, forget not to acknowledge his bounty, in the riſing ſun, the growing corn, and the falling rain. Think of his faithful word, read his promiſes, lay them up in your memories, write them in your hearts; and eſpecially, the exceeding great and precious promiſes of the everlaſting goſpel, which may be yours, which you are intreated to accept as yours, and if they be not yours, you ſhall render an account to himſelf at the laſt day, for receiving them in vain.——Think alſo of his Providence, all you have ſeen, and all you have felt, of preſerving goodneſs, and of redeeming grace; and continue to cleave to him as your portion, in the Pſalmiſt's words, Pſalm xlviii. 14. "This God is our God, for ever and ever, he will be our "guide even unto death."

3. In the laſt place, learn from hence, what is the ſureſt and ſhorteſt, and indeed, the only ſafe way of deliverance from ſuffering. Flee to God as your *ſtrong tower*, by prayer and ſupplication: but with this, endeavor by the renewed exerciſe of faith in your Redeemer's blood, to

aſcertain your title to the favor of God; endeavor by a ſtedfaſt adherence to your duty, to commit your ways to God; and ſo ſoon, and ſo far, as you have good ground to know that you are his children, you ought to reſiſt and baniſh every doubt of your ſecurity. Rom. viii. 28. "And "we know, that all things work together for good to them "that love God; to them who are the called according "to his purpoſe." Verſe 32. of the ſame chapter. "He "that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for "us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all "things."

THE OBJECT OF A CHRISTIAN'S DESIRE IN RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

A

SERMON.

EXODUS xxxiii. 18.

And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy Glory.

THESE are the words of an Old Teſtament Saint; of that Moſes, who, as a ſervant, was faithful over all the houſe of God. True piety is the ſame in ſubſtance in all ages, and points at one thing as its centre and its reſt, the knowledge and enjoyment of God. In the preceding verſes, Moſes had been employed in earneſt prayer and interceſſion for the people of Iſrael. He had met with ſucceſs and acceptance in theſe requeſts; for it is ſaid, in the 14th verſe, "My preſence ſhall go with thee, and I "will give thee reſt." And in the 17th, "And the Lord "ſaid unto Moſes, I will do this thing alſo that thou haſt "ſpoken; for thou haſt found grace in my ſight, and I "know thee by name." The condeſcenſion of a gracious God, though is ſatisfies, does not extinguiſh the deſires of his ſaints, but rather makes them more ardent and importunate; for he immediately adds, in the words of the text, *I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.* It is highly probable, from what follows, that this deſire included more than was proper for the preſent ſtate; yet ſuch a diſcovery as was poſſible, or could be uſeful to him, is graciouſly

promiſed, "And he ſaid, I will make all my goodneſs paſs "before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord "before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be "gracious, and will ſhew mercy on whom I will ſhew "mercy."

My dear brethren, it is our diſtinguiſhed privilege, that we have daily unmoleſted acceſs to the houſe and ordinances of God. We ought to rejoice, that we have ſo many clear and expreſs promiſes of the divine preſence, in New Teſtament worſhip. But what cauſe have we to be aſhamed, that we are ſo exceeding prone to ſtop ſhort in the threſhold, to content ourſelves with the mere form, inſtead of earneſtly breathing after real, inward, and ſenſible communion with God? I have therefore choſen this ſubject, in the view of that ſolemn ordinance, *The Lord's Supper*, where we have a ſenſible repreſentation of Chriſt crucified, the great mean of our acceſs to God, that we may ſerve him on that occaſion particularly, and the remaining part of our lives habitually, in ſpirit and in truth. And, Oh, that we may have daily more experience of the ſweetneſs and benefit of his ſervice on earth! and may daily long more for that time, when we ſhall ſerve him in a manner infinitely more perfect and joyful in his temple above!

In diſcourſing on this ſubject, I propoſe, in dependence on divine ſtrength,

I. To explain what is the object of a ſaint's deſire, when he ſaith, in the words of Moſes, *I beſeech thee, ſhew me thy glory.*

II. To improve the ſubject—particularly by pointing out what is the moſt proper preparation for ſuch a diſcovery.

I. Then, I am to explain what is the object of a ſaint's deſire, when he ſaith, in the words of Moſes, *I beſeech thee, ſhew me thy glory.* It is very probable, from the paſſage following the text, which I have read, that Moſes had ſome regard to the ſenſible appearance, which, in that diſpenſation, did often accompany or notify the immediate preſence of the angel of the covenant. He deſired,

probably, to be ſtrengthened for beholding ſtedfaſtly the Shechinach, or bright and luminous cloud which ſometimes appeared over the tabernacle, and, by its glorious luſtre, tended to affect the mind with a ſenſe of the power and ſovereignty of the Lord Jehovah. But this, ſurely, was not all; for this, in itſelf, was only a ſubſidiary mean which ſerved to carry their views to the real and ſpiritual glory of God. To the laſt therefore, we ſhall confine our attention, as to what the goſpel particularly opens to us, and what believers are enabled, by faith, to apprehend.

When Chriſtians, then, deſire to ſee the glory of God, it ſeems chiefly to imply the following things: 1. They deſire to ſee the glory of an eternal independent God; they deſire to ſee the only living and true God in his own inherent excellence and infinite perfection. God is the ſource and ſum of all excellence; or, in the language of the Pſalmiſt, "the perfection of beauty." Every thing noble or beautiful in the creature, is only a faint ray from the fulneſs of the Creator's glory. Therefore he is the proper object of the higheſt eſteem, and moſt profound veneration, of every reaſonable creature. The viſion and fruition of God conſtitute the employment and happineſs of heaven: and even here, while they are in preparation for the higher houſe, the ſaints deſire ſuch a diſcovery of the divine glory as their condition will admit of, and take pleaſure in contemplating his nature, as revealed to them both in his word and in his works. They dwell with adoring wonder, on all his attributes, which are boundleſs and unſearchable: the immenſity of his being, who fills heaven and earth with his preſence, who ſeeth in ſecret, and from whom the thickeſt darkneſs cannot cover us; his irreſiſtible power, "who ſpake, and it was done, who "commanded, and it ſtood faſt;"—who called this great univerſe out of nothing into being, "who doth in the army "of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth what-"ever ſeems good unto him:" his infinite holineſs and purity, "with whom evil cannot dwell, nor ſinners ſtand "in his preſence; who looketh to the moon, and it "ſhineth not, to the ſtars, and they are not pure in his "ſight:" his infinite wiſdom, "who worketh all things

" according to his will, who bringeth the counsel of the " heathen to nought, and makes the devices of the people " of none effect:" his boundless goodness, which fills the earth, and flows in plenteous streams to all the creatures of his power.

But, perhaps, some are saying, what is there extraordinary or peculiar in all this? is it not clearly revealed in the word of God? can any Christian be ignorant of it? If Moses, in that early dispensation, desired a discovery of the divine perfections, nothing of that kind is wanting to us, who, since the fulness of time, have so complete a revelation in the New Testament. But, my brethren, I must beg of you to observe these two things:

1. That there is in the fulness of the Godhead an infinite and endless variety even for the employment of our intellectual powers. Well might Zophar, in the book of Job, say, Job xi. 7, 8, 9. " Canst thou, by searching, find " out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfec- " tion? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? " deeper than hell, what canst thou know? the measure " thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the " sea."

2. That the real and proper knowledge of the glory of God is by inward and spiritual illumination. The holy Scriptures themselves, however clear a discovery they contain of the nature of God, are no better than a sealed book to many even of the greatest comprehension of mind. It is one thing to think, and speak, and reason on the perfections of God, as an object of science, and another to glorify him as God, or to have a deep and awful impression of him upon our hearts. Real believers will know this by experience. A discovery of the glory of God, is not to inform them of a truth which they never heard before, but to give lively penetrating views of the meaning and importance of those truths of which they had, perhaps, heard and spoken times without number. Sometimes one word spoken of the Eternal, the Almighty, the Holy One, will be carried home upon the conscience and heart with such irresistible force, as to shew them more of God than ever they had seen before. O what a difference is there between

the way in which we uſe the ſame words in prayer or praiſe, at one time, and at another! None but downright atheiſts will deny the omniſcience and omnipreſence of God; but how far is this general acknowledgment from that overwhelming ſenſe of his preſence which believers have ſometimes in his worſhip in public or in ſecret. What a new ſenſe of God's preſence had Jacob at Bethel, when he ſaid, Gen. xxviii. 16, 17. "Surely the Lord is "in this place, and I knew it not: and he was afraid, "and ſaid, how dreadful is this place? this is none other "but the houſe of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" What a ſenſe of God's preſence had Hagar, Gen. xvi. 13. when "ſhe called the name of the Lord that ſpake unto "her, thou, God, ſeeſt me; for, ſhe ſaid, have I alſo here "looked after him that ſeeth me?" or Job when he expreſſes himſelf thus, Job xlii. 5, 6. "I have heard of thee "by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee. "Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes?"

I ſhall only further obſerve, that it plainly appears that this diſcovery of the glory of God, belongs only to his own people. Wicked men are ſaid, in ſcripture, to be ſuch as know not God. They are alſo deſcribed a little differently, as not having God in all their thoughts; not but that wicked men may have a general or cuſtomary belief, in the being and perfections of God, but becauſe they have not that intimate ſenſe of his preſence, that diſcovery of the glory and amiableneſs of his perfections, which is peculiar to his own children. Even the natural perfections of God, his power and wiſdom, cannot be beheld with ſuch veneration by any, as by thoſe who are ſenſible of their obligations to ſerve him. But above all, the glory of his infinite holineſs and juſtice can never be ſeen, but by thoſe who deſire to ſubmit to it; nor the glory of his infinite mercy, but by thoſe who ſee themſelves indebted to it. This leads me to obſerve,

2. That the believer deſires to ſee the glory of a gracious and reconciled God, not only infinitely glorious in himſelf, but infinitely merciful to him. This view ought never to be ſeparated from the former. Take away the divine mercy, and the luſtre of his other perfections is too

ſtrong for us to behold. The power, wiſdom, holineſs and juſtice of God, ſeparated from his mercy, ſpeak nothing but unmixed terror to the guilty. It is very probable, that there was ſomething in the deſire of Moſes, in the text, according to his own view, ignorant and unadviſed; but God granted his requeſt only in ſuch a way as could be uſeful to him. When he ſays, *I beseech thee shew me thy glory*, the anſwer is in the following terms, "I will make all my "goodneſs paſs before thee; and I will proclaim the name "of the Lord before thee. And I will be gracious to "whom I will be gracious, and will ſhew mercy on whom "I will ſhew mercy." And again, it is ſaid in the following chapter, 6, 7, verſes. "And the Lord paſſed by "before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, "merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering and abundant in "goodneſs and truth. Keeping mercy for thouſands, "forgiving iniquity, and tranſgreſſion, and ſin: and that "will by no means clear the guilty, viſiting the iniquity of "the fathers upon the children, and upon the childrens "children, unto the third and fourth generation."

We may alſo ſee, that in the whole diſpenſation of divine grace to men, God is repreſented as coming under a peculiar relation to them; and they are called not only to ſerve him as God, but to truſt in him as their God. Every hearer muſt be ſenſible, how eſſential this is to a believer's deſire, of ſeeing the glory of God. He cannot conſider him as God over-all, without, at the ſame time, remembering, that he is one with whom he hath to do. There is alſo a neceſſity here peculiar to ourſelves. The holy angels conſider him as their Maker and their happineſs: but the children of Adam muſt conſider, not only his goodneſs to the innocent, but his mercy to the guilty. This glory of God ſhines brightly, and ſhines only in the face of Jeſus Chriſt. God, we are told, "dwelleth in light "which no man can approach unto. No man hath ſeen "God at any time; but the only begotten of the Father, "he hath declared him." In this wonderful diſpenſation, indeed, all the perfections of God are found united; but above all, "Grace and mercy ſhine and reign through "righteouſneſs, by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS HUMILIATION.

A

SERMON.

Iſaiah lxiii. 1. ſecond clauſe.

——*This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?*——

MY brethren, all the works of God are great and marvellous, worthy of the attention and admiration of his rational creatures. The contemplation of what is now revealed of him, is the nobleſt employment of which we are capable in this world: and the more clear and enlarged contemplation of him ſhall be our employment and happineſs in the world above. But of all the works of God, there is none in which his perfections are ſo ſignally diſplayed, as in the redemption of an elect world through Jeſus Chriſt. All other views of his glory are faint and fading in compariſon of this. However much we are called to adore the power and wiſdom of Creation, or the goodneſs and bounty of Providence, our praiſes are extremely defective, if we omit that new ſong which he hath put into our mouths, even praiſe to our God for his unſpeakable gift.

Redeeming love, my brethren, is the immediate object of our attention in the holy ordinance of the Lord's ſupper. Here is a ſymbolical repreſentation of it, that faith may be ſtrengthened by the aid of ſenſe. I hope, therefore, it will not be improper, by way of preparation for it, to take a view of the glory of our Redeemer's character, whoſe ſufferings we are now to commemorate. As ſal-

vation is an agreeable ſound, ſo the name of a Saviour is a delightful name to every believer. I may therefore ſafely preſume upon the attention of all ſuch at leaſt, while I endeavor to ſet him before you, as he is repreſented in the ſtrong and forcible language of the text, *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?* Such a theme will be the moſt proper introduction to the work of this day; that, as we are to commemorate Chriſt's ſufferings as an extraordinary event, he is here ſpoken of, and his appearance inquired into, in words of aſtoniſhment and admiration: *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah! this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength!* I ſhall not ſpend time in aſſigning the reaſons why interpreters generally apply theſe words to Chriſt, but only obſerve, that, on this ſuppoſition, they contain a mixed repreſentation of glory and ſuffering, of ſtrength and abaſement, which is the very ſubſtance and meaning of a Saviour on the croſs.

Agreeably to this, the ſingle point I have in view, in the preſent diſcourſe, is, through Divine aſſiſtance, to point out to you, in what reſpects the glory of our Redeemer was apparent even in his ſufferings, and ſhone through even the dark cloud that covered him in his humiliation, or in the language of the text, how he might be ſaid, *to travel in the greatness of his strength*: and then I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of what may be ſaid.

I. I am to point out to you, in what reſpects the glory of our Redeemer was apparent even in his ſufferings, and ſhone through even the dark cloud that covered him in his humiliation. As the love of God to man, in providing redemption for him, was inconceivable, ſo the mean which he employed, in accompliſhing this great work, was equally aſtoniſhing. That his eternal and well-beloved Son ſhould veil his divine glory, clothe himſelf with human fleſh, ſubject himſelf to a life of pain and ſuffering, and at laſt make his ſoul an offering for ſin upon a croſs. This, as it was not after the manner of men, nor bore

upon it any of the marks of human wiſdom, as it was deſigned and doth tend, to abaſe the pride of man, and exalt the grace of God; ſo it is with difficulty that man can be brought to an approbation of it. "The croſs of Chriſt "was to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks "fooliſhneſs." It is therefore proper, that when we are to commemorate the incarnation and death of our Redeemer, we ſhould attend to theſe evidences of his divine glory that ſtill appeared even in his loweſt abaſement. By this means, while we grieve for the ſufferings that ſin brought upon him, we may ſtill triumph in his power; for he is glorious even in his red apparel, and travels in the greatneſs of his ſtrength.

I muſt here obſerve, that I do not mainly intend, in diſcourſing on this ſubject, to eſtabliſh the truth of our Saviour's divine miſſion, againſt thoſe who deny it on the above or any other account: this would be too cold and abſtracted an argument for our preſent purpoſe. What I propoſe, is chiefly and directly, deſigned for heightening the devotion, for quickening the love, and increaſing the faith and comfort of believers. However, at the ſame time, conſidering the humiliation of Chriſt, in the light of an objection againſt his divine commiſſion, from the ſuggeſtions of human wiſdom, what ſhall be ſaid may alſo be conſidered as an anſwer to this objection, and ſerving to remove the offence of the croſs.

1. Upon this ſubject, therefore, obſerve, firſt, the glory of our Redeemer, in his ſufferings, appears from his ready and chearful undertaking of the work of our redemption. There can be little honor to any man in ſubmitting to what he cannot avoid, or doing what he dare not refuſe; but the humiliation of Chriſt was perfectly voluntary, as no conſtraint could be put upon him. Therefore his original dignity and greatneſs, is not only, if I may ſpeak ſo, preſerved unhurt, but improved and heightened by the grace of infinite condeſcenſion. This circumſtance of Chriſt's readineſs to undertake the work of our redemption, is often taken notice of in ſcripture. Pſal. xl. 6, 7, 8. "Sacrifice and offering thou didſt not deſire, mine ears "haſt thou opened; burnt-offering and ſin-offering haſt

" thou not required. Then ſaid I, Lo I come; in the " volume of thy book it is written of me: I delight to do " thy will, O my God!—" It is certain, that redemption could not be the work of a creature; and it is alſo probable, that no created being would have been willing to eſſay it. Nay, it is thought by many to be the import of the remarkable paſſage juſt now cited, which is applied by the apoſtle Paul to our Saviour, that in the councils of heaven it was actually propoſed to thoſe glorious ſpirits that ſurround the throne of God, and their ſtrength and inclination both were found inſufficient. Neither is there any thing improbable in the ſuppoſition, that God might diſcover to them his purpoſe of mercy, upon a proper mediator interpoſing, and that none was found willing to ſubject himſelf to divine wrath, incurred by rebellious man. If ſo, then it is not only in one ſenſe, but in all ſenſes true, what Chriſt is repreſented as ſaying in the 5th verſe of the chapter where my text lies, " And I looked, and there " was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to " uphold; therefore mine own arm brought ſalvation unto " me, and my fury it upheld me." This interpretation may be confirmed by ſomething ſimilar to it, recorded, John, vi. 5, 6. " When Jeſus then lift up his eyes, and " ſaw a great company come unto him, he ſaith unto Phi- " lip, Whence ſhall we buy bread that theſe may eat? " And this he ſaid to prove him; for he himſelf knew " what he would do." There is another paſſage which gives us nearly the ſame idea, viz. of Chriſt's being only capable of taking the charge of the redeemed and their intereſts in providence, Rev. v. 2. 3, 4, 5. " And I ſaw a " ſtrong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is " worthy to open the book, and to looſe the ſeals thereof? " And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the " earth, was able to open the book, neither to look there- " on. And I wept much becauſe no man was found wor- " thy to open, and to read the book, neither to look there- " on. And one of the elders ſaith unto me, Weep not; " behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, " hath prevailed to open the book, and to looſe the ſeven " ſeals thereof." How glorious then was the compaſſion

of our Redeemer, who ſo willingly and chearfully ſubjected himſelf to that abaſement and ſuffering, to which none could conſtrain him? Thus he ſays to himſelf, John x. 17, 18. "Therefore doth my Father love me, becauſe I "lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man "taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myſelf: I have "power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. "This commandment have I received of my Father." He is not repreſented as merely conſenting, becauſe none elſe could or would perform the work, and ſo having it as it were devolved upon him by neceſſity; not as yielding with reluctance, and overcome by great earneſtneſs and importunity, but ſaying with readineſs and chearfulneſs, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book, it is written of "me. I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea thy law "is within my heart."

There is one circumſtance which deſerves particular notice, when we are conſidering the dignity of our Redeemer's undertaking; that he did well and thoroughly underſtand the difficulty of it, and the weight of that wrath which he ſubmitted to endure. It is not ſuch an evidence of greatneſs of mind, when a perſon involves himſelf in difficulties, and expoſes himſelf to dangers, if he only runs an uncertain riſk of meeting with them, or has but a confuſed and indiſtinct apprehenſion of their nature; but it diſcovers a peculiar fortitude of ſpirit to have a clear view of ſufferings, and yet compoſedly and ſteadily to ſubmit to them for a good end. So true is this maxim, that it ſeems to be the only thing that renders human life ſupportable, that all future ſufferings are uncertain even in the event, and, at any rate, in their nature but imperfectly known. Now, how does it ſerve to illuſtrate the glory of our Redeemer's undertaking, that he had a clear and perfect foreknowledge of every event that was to befal him? He knew the number and malice of the enemies he had to encounter; and the bitterneſs of that cup, the dregs of which he was to drink off: Yet ſteady to his purpoſe, and conſcious of his own power, he went out to the combat as one aſſured of victory. As he began ſo he carried on his work, with the ſame undaunted reſolution; witneſs what he ſays,

Luke xii. 50. "But I have a baptiſm to be baptized with, "and how am I ſtraitened till it be accompliſhed!" All this, my brethren, is further confirmed, by ſome paſſages which are recorded toward the cloſe of his life, when he drew near to the concluding ſcene of his ſufferings. Matt. xvi. 21. "From that time forth began Jeſus to ſhew unto "his diſciples, how that he muſt go unto Jeruſalem, and "ſuffer many things of the elders, and chief prieſts, and "Scribes, and be killed, and be raiſed again the third "day." ——xx. 17, 18, 19. "And Jeſus going up to Je- "ruſalem, took the twelve diſciples apart in the way, and "ſaid unto them, Behold we go up to Jeruſalem, and the "Son of man ſhall be betrayed unto the chief prieſts, and "unto the ſcribes, and they ſhall condemn him to death. "And ſhall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock and to "ſcourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he ſhall "riſe again." Luke ix. 51. "And it came to paſs, when "the time was come that he ſhould be received up, he "ſtedfaſtly ſet his face to go to Jeruſalem." To theſe I ſhall only add, John xviii. 11. "Then ſaid Jeſus unto Peter, "Put up thy ſword into the ſheath: the cup which my "Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?" Thus did there appear a glory even in his humiliation, a majeſty even in his ſuffering; and thus did he come forth and travel in the greatneſs of his ſtrength.

In the ſecond place, the glory of our Redeemer, in his humiliation, appears from the greatneſs of thoſe ſufferings which he endured. Though, to the eye of ſenſe, a ſtate of ſuffering is apt to appear contemptible; to thoſe who juſtly view the ſufferings of Chriſt, there will be found far greater evidences of his power. A weak perſon is cruſhed by a ſmall weight; but he who is able to endure uncommon ſufferings, ſhows himſelf to be poſſeſſed of uncommon ſtrength. Now, our bleſſed Lord and Saviour did, in his life, in this world, endure the greateſt and moſt dreadful ſufferings. His whole life was one continued track of the heavieſt ſufferings of which human nature is capable. Iſa. liii. 3. "He is deſpiſed and rejected "of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief: "and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was de-

" ſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not!" This, my brethren, is a known ſubject, yet it is the ſubject which we ought, by faith, to dwell upon this day; and, indeed, the benefit and comfort of believers does not depend on things new and engaging to the fancy, but on the Spirit of God ſetting home known truths with force and efficacy on the heart. Let me therefore beg your attention to two or three obvious remarks on the ſufferings of Chriſt. 1. His afflictions began early, with his firſt entrance into the world. No ſooner did the man Chriſt Jeſus ſee the light of this world, but preſently did affliction ſalute him. Immediately after his contemptible birth, did Herod, that bloody tyrant, ſeek to deſtroy him; ſo that we may allude to that expreſſion, Rev. xii. 4. " —And the dragon ſtood before the " woman which was ready to be delivered, to devour her " child as ſoon as it was born."

2. His afflictions were conſtant and perpetual, without interruption. It is recorded, not only by Chriſtians, but even by heathens, who had heard of his life, that he was never obſerved to laugh, but frequently ſeen weeping; ſo that he well accompliſhed that propheſy, " A man of ſor- " rows, and acquainted with grief." It is probable, from ſeveral paſſages in the prophetical writings, that he was of a very tender and ſenſible frame; and therefore his afflictions had a great and powerful effect upon him. They ſo deeply touched him, that his body was waſted, and his ſtrength melted and decayed, which is the uſual effect of laſting and continued ſorrow. Iſa. lii. 14. " As many " were aſtonied at thee; his viſage was ſo marred more " than any man, and his form more than the ſons of men." Pſal. xxii. 14, 15. " I am poured out like water, and all " my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is " melted in the midſt of my bowels: my ſtrength is dried " up like a potſherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my " jaws: and thou haſt brought me into the duſt of death." So that we may alſo apply to him what Job ſays of himſelf, Job xvi. 8. " And thou haſt filled me with wrinkles, which " is a witneſs againſt me: and my leanneſs riſing up in " me, beareth witneſs to my face.

3. His afflictions were of the fevereſt kind. This I might ſhow you, at large, from the hiſtory, by particularizing them all: I only mention four, poverty, reproach, temptation, and ſympathy with others. He was ſo poor, as to depend upon the charity of others for his ſubſtance; and could ſay, Luke ix. 58. "Foxes have holes, and birds "of the air have neſts, but the Son of man hath not where "to lay his head."——Reproach was thrown upon him without meaſure, and of the worſt kind. He was called a glutton and a wine-bibber, a deceiver, a blaſphemer, a Samaritan, and one that had a devil. Now, my brethren, all that know any thing of human nature, know that reproach and contempt are perhaps the hardeſt to bear of any ſufferings to which we are expoſed; and the authors of theſe calumnies were ſuch whoſe circumſtances rendered them moſt ſharp and ſevere; for they were the Scribes and Phariſees, or the miniſters of thoſe times, who ſerved in the temple, as the whole hiſtory ſhows, and his own natural relations, as appears from Mark iii. 21. John vii. 3, 4, 5.—Another remarkable affliction our Lord endured, was temptation, and that of the groſſeſt kind, as is plain from Matth. iv. 3,—11. We are told, "he was in all "points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin." What was the preciſe nature and influence of ſuch temptations on him, we cannot know; only it deſerves notice on this particular, that whereas ſome of the other afflictions he endured, were ſuch as his perfect purity could not but render more tolerable than otherwiſe they would have been, this on the other hand, was ſuch, that by how much the more pure and holy he was, ſo much the more diſtreſs would he feel on being aſſaulted with the vile temptations of the devil, and having his horrid and abominable ſuggeſtions preſented to the fancy.——I only further mention his ſufferings, from ſympathy with others. The moſt excellent and worthy of the human kind are ſuch as have the tendereſt feelings of the ſufferings of others. Now, ſince he was a perfect man, ſince tenderneſs ſeems to have been his ruling character, and his errand into the world a meſſage of love flowing from infinite compaſſion as its cauſe, we muſt ſuppoſe him liable to the fevereſt ſuf-

ferings of this kind. I know the hard-hearted, ſelfiſh world, will find it difficult to conceive this as a ſource of ſevere ſuffering, eſpecially ſuch as have no regard to any thing beyond this world. But this is not the caſe with all; for I am certain there are ſome whoſe ſharpeſt pangs have been occaſioned by the ſufferings of others, eſpecially when of a ſpiritual kind. To form ſome conception of this, let us imagine, what muſt be the anguiſh of a pious and affectionate parent, on the death of a wicked a child, who apparently trod in the path of the deſtroyer, and of whom he hath the greateſt reaſon to fear, that he no ſooner cloſed his eyes on the light of this world, than he lifted them up in the torments of hell. Now, as compaſſion was ſtronger in none than in the man Chriſt Jeſus, ſo none could have ſo clear a view of the miſery of thoſe who were the objects of it; and therefore, no doubt, this was a ſource of the deepeſt affliction to his ſoul.

4. In the laſt place, the afflictions of our Lord not only continued, but increaſed, through his life, till they, at laſt, iſſued in an extraordinary conflict with the powers of darkneſs, and an immediate ſubjection to the wrath of a ſin avenging God. Let it be obſerved, that though I here mention particularly his enduring the wrath of God, as the laſt and finiſhing part of his ſufferings, I do not mean to confine his ſufferings from the hand of God to this ſeaſon. Without all queſtion, every part of his humiliation was ſatisfactory to the divine juſtice, and contributed to appeaſe the wrath of God. This cup was put to his mouth ſo ſoon as he aſſumed our nature; he continued to drink of it daily, and was therefore juſtly ſtiled a man of ſorrows; but, in the cloſe of life, he came to drink off the very bittereſt dregs of it. The waves of divine wrath went over him; and he waded ſtill deeper and deeper in this troubled ocean, till he was well nigh overwhelmed. That Chriſt ſuffered under the wrath of God in an eminent degree, is manifeſt both from the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, and the relation given of the event in the New. Iſa. liii. 5.—10. "But he was wounded "for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: "the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with

" his ſtripes we are healed. All we, like ſheep, have " gone aſtray; we have turned every one to his own way, " and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. " He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened " not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter " and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he open- " eth not his mouth. He was taken from priſon and from " judgment: and who ſhall declare his generation? for " he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the " tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken. And he " made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in " his death, becauſe he had done no violence, neither was " any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleaſed the Lord to " bruiſe him: he hath put him to grief: when thou ſhalt " make his ſoul an offering for ſin, he ſhall ſee his ſeed, he " ſhall prolong his days, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhall " proſper in his hand." See the relation of his ſufferings in the garden, Matth. xxvi. 38, 39, " Then ſaith he un- " to them, my ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto " death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he " went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, " ſaying, O, my Father! if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs " from me! nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt! " Mark xiv. 33, 34, 35, 36. And he taketh with him " Peter, and James, and John, and began to be ſore ama- " zed, and to be very heavy, and ſaith unto them, my ſoul " is exceeding ſorrowful unto death! tarry ye here, and " watch; and he went forward a little, and fell on the " ground, and prayed, that if it were poſſible the hour " might paſs from him! And he ſaid, Abba, Father, all " things are poſſible unto thee: take away this cup from " me! nevertheleſs, not what I will, but what thou wilt! " Luke xxii. 43, 44. And there appeared an angel unto " him from heaven, ſtrengthening him; and, being in an " agony, he prayed more earneſtly! and his ſweat was, as " it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground!" That the ſame deep diſtreſs of ſoul continued upon the croſs, is plain from this lamentable exclamation, Matth. xxvii. 46. " And, about the ninth hour, Jeſus cried with " a loud voice, ſaying, Eli, Eli, lamaſabachthani! that

" that is to say, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken " me!" In what manner, precisely, Christ suffered the wrath of God on this occasion, it would be too bold for us to determine; whether it was only God's withdrawing from his human soul the comforts of his sensible presence —his being assaulted and distressed with the infernal suggestions of the devil—his having a lively picture presented to his imagination of the miseries of mankind here, and hereafter, on account of sin, and suffering with them by compassion and sympathy—or, finally, God's positively inflicting upon him, for a season, the same punishment in kind, at least, if not in degree, that should have befallen those for whom he suffered, and which the impenitent still shall for ever endure. This last is by some supposed impossible and contradictory, as much of their misery arises from an evil conscience, from which he was absolutely free; and from despair of mercy, which none will affirm that even God's desertion of him at that awful season did imply. It is probable, there was a mixture of all these particulars in his mingled cup. And, as to the last, I shall only say, that the pain and anguish, that follows any reflection, of a rational soul, is only connected with it by the determination of God, the Creator of our spirits: therefore it was certainly in the power of the Almighty to inflict a sense of pain in any kind, or in any degree, on the holy created soul of the man, Christ Jesus. And I see no other contrariety to the divine perfections, in inflicting that very anguish on the holy and innocent Saviour, than in substituting him in our room at all, and bruising him for our iniquities. One thing is certain, that, in his life, and at his death, he suffered what was a full reparation of the dishonor done to God; a sufficient vindication of the purity of his nature, and the authority of his broken law, and what purchased pardon and peace, sanctification, and eternal glory, to a whole world of elect sinners. And now, my brethren, from this view, did not our Redeemer travel in the greatness of his strength? Was it a small strength that could go through all this track of suffering, without sinking in the way? Yet this did he with unshaken constancy: and, as his giving up his life was the last part of it, so

he expired not, before he could ſay, IT IS FINISHED! Well, then, might the anſwer be given to the queſtion in my text, *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?* in the words that follow, "I that ſpeak in righteouſneſs, mighty to ſave."

We proceed to obſerve in the 3d place, that the glory of our Redeemer in his ſufferings, appears from the purity of his carriage, and the perfection of his patience under them. The former conſideration ſhows his natural ſtrength, (ſo to ſpeak) and this his moral excellence. Affliction is the touchſtone of virtue, tries its ſincerity, and illuſtrates its beauty. Therefore we are told, Heb. ii. 10. "That it became him, for whom are all things, and by "whom are all things, in bringing many ſons unto glory, "to make the captain of their ſalvation perfect through "ſufferings." Nothing could give a greater value to the ſacrifice he offered up, than the meekneſs and patience with which he reſigned that life which was not forfeited, but voluntarily ſurrendered. Iſa. liii. 7. "He was op-"preſſed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his "mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as "a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not "his mouth." It is worth while to reflect, on that continued and invincible patience with which he went through the ſeveral ſteps of his ſufferings: that reproach and calumny, that contempt and abuſe, which he met with from thoſe in whoſe intereſt he was ſo deeply engaged, did not excite his indignation, but his compaſſion. Luke xix. 41. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and "wept over it, ſaying, if thou hadſt known, even thou, at "leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy "peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." When his ignorant diſciples would have defended him from the aſſaults of his enemies, he ſays, John xviii. 11.—"The "cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink "it?" When he entered upon the laſt and heavieſt part of his ſufferings, and began to feel their anguiſh, he ſays, John xii. 27. "Now is my ſoul troubled, and what ſhall "I ſay? Father, ſave me from this hour! but for this

" cauſe came I unto this hour." And in that dreadful ſeaſon, when in the midſt of his hardeſt conflict, this is the form of his prayer, Matth. xxvi. 39. " O my Father! " if it be poſſible let this cup paſs from me: nevertheleſs, " not as I will, but as thou wilt." And a little after, verſe 42. " O my Father! if this cup may nor paſs away " from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Was not this divine glory ſhining through the dark cloud that encompaſſed him? Was not this the patience of a God? And, in ſpite of the ſhame of the croſs, on which he hung, did it not conſtrain the centurion that attended his crucifixion to ſay, " Certainly this was a righteous man! " Truly this man was the Son of God!"

In the laſt place, The glory of a ſuffering Saviour appears from the end he had in view in his ſufferings, and which he ſo effectually obtained. This was none other than the glory of the great God, and the everlaſting ſalvation of elect ſinners. It was to do the will of his heavenly Father that he came into the world, and in doing this he delighted. Towards the cloſe of his life he thus addreſſes his Father, John xvii. 4. " I have glorified thee " on the earth; I have finiſhed the work which thou ga- " veſt me to do." He not only exhibited a fair and bright image of the divine glory in his perſonal character, while he dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, but in his work, as Mediator, illuſtrated all the perfections of God; and in particular, glorified his juſtice and magnified his mercy. If therefore a worthy end beautifies and ennobles any difficult undertaking, this excellent purpoſe muſt give dignity to a crucified Saviour.

But ought we not to add, the end ſo cloſely connected with this, the ſalvation of periſhing ſinners. Is not this a deſign, of the beauty of which we ought to be particularly ſenſible? Had not our compaſſionate Redeemer ſtept in between us and the ſtroke of divine juſtice, we had for ever lain under the wrath of the Almighty. And, Oh, how unable had we been to bear that vengeance which was ſo heavy to him! How glorious does he appear to the convinced ſinner in his red apparel! and what reaſon has he to ſay, " Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to

" receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, " and honor, and glory, and bleſſing!"

I ſhall now conclude this head, with obſerving, that I have all along conſidered Chriſt as God and man, in one perſon, our Mediator. I am ſenſible, however, he could only ſuffer in his human nature, and indeed became man that he might be capable of ſuffering. But it was the inconceivable union of the human nature with the divine, from which he derived his glory, which gave him ſtrength for ſuffering, and made his ſufferings of value ſufficient for the purchaſe of our redemption.

I come, now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1ſt, We are, here, called to admire and adore the unſearchable wiſdom, and unſpeakable love of God. There is a boundleſs depth in all the works and ways of God, and particularly here. Upon a ſlight view, we may be apt to take offence at the croſs; to hide our faces from him; to be diſguſted at an incarnate God, the Lord of glory, deſpiſed and trampled on by a proud Phariſee; the Creator of the ends of the earth ſtanding at the judgment-ſeat of a weak mortal; and the Author life giving up the ghoſt. But, upon a nearer inſpection, muſt we not admire the harmony of the divine attributes, in our redemption, upon this plan? that theſe perfections which ſeem to limit each other in their exerciſe, ſhould be, in conjunction, more illuſtriouſly diſplayed: that God's infinite holineſs, and abhorrence of ſin, nay, his impartial juſtice, ſhould be more diſplayed in the pardon than the condemnation of the ſinner: that ſo ſignal a defeat ſhould be given to the enemy of ſouls, even when he ſeemed exulting in the ſucceſs of his deſigns: that our Lord, by death, ſhould deſtroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and, by being lifted up from the earth, as unworthy of a place on it, he ſhould draw all men unto him, joining thus the extremities of glory and baſeneſs, power and humiliation, and travelling in the greatneſs of his ſtrength. This, without doubt, ſhall afford ſubject for the adoring inquiry of glorified ſaints to eternal ages; and we ought to begin it here, ſaying with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxii. 17. " His

" name ſhall endure forever: his name ſhall be continued " as long as the ſun; and men ſhall be bleſſed in him: all " nations ſhall call him bleſſed!"

2dly, Suffer me to improve the ſubject, by ſhewing the guilt and danger of all who are not reconciled to God, eſpecially thoſe, who, by continuing in unbelief and impenitence, ſhall die in that condition. There is nothing we can more juſtly infer from what hath been ſaid, than the holineſs of God, and his deteſtation of ſin. Such is the hardneſs of heart of many ſinners, and ſuch their partiality to themſelves, that it is a matter of the utmoſt difficulty to convince them either of their guilt or danger. But, if you have any belief in the truths of the goſpel, if you believe the certainty of that tranſaction which we are this day to commemorate, with what fear and trembling ought you to reflect upon the juſtice of God? If he puniſhed ſin ſo ſeverely in the perſon of his own Son, how ſhall he puniſh it in the perſons of the finally impenitent? If a temporary ſuffering of the wrath of God was ſo terrible to him, who travelled through it in the greatneſs of his ſtrength, what ſhall it be to thoſe who ſhall lie under it to eternity, without the leaſt ray of hope or conſolation? what ſhall it be to thoſe who ſhall have nothing to ſupport them in their unchangeable abode, but an accuſing conſcience, and deſpair of mercy?

I cannot help obſerving, hear it, O ſinners, and tremble! that a deſpiſed goſpel ſhall be an aggravation of the guilt, and an addition to the miſery, of all to whom it was offered, Heb. ii. 2. " For, if the word ſpoken by angels " was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience " received a juſt recompence of reward, how ſhall we eſ- " cape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?"—Heb. x. 28, 29. " He that deſpiſed Moſes' law died, without mercy, un- " der two or three witneſſes: of how much ſorer puniſh- " ment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath " trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted " the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, " an unholy thing, and hath done deſpite unto the Spirit " of grace?" The ſeverity of the puniſhment of ſinners rejecting the goſpel, ſhall bear a juſt proportion to the love

and mercy of God manifeſted in that diſpenſation. If theſe are juſtly called unſpeakably great, the other muſt be inconceivably dreadful. Every drop of that blood, which was ſpilt in behalf of ſinners, ſhall be as oil to the flames, that conſume the impenitent, and make them burn, with greater fierceneſs, to all the ages of eternity. Remember, I beſeech you, that our Saviour ſhall continue in the character of adminiſtrator of the covenant of grace, till the final doom of ſinners be ordained. The ſame perſon, whoſe ſoul was made an offering for ſin, and who groaned on Calvary, ſhall, one day, come in his own and in his Father's glory, attended with his angels, as the miniſters of his juſtice; then "every eye ſhall ſee him, and thoſe "alſo that pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth ſhall "wail becauſe of him." Then how ſhall his enemies ſtand before him, when thoſe who came to apprehend him fell to the ground, at his word, even in his humiliation? Thoſe who obſtinately refuſe to be the trophies of his grace ſhall then be the monuments of his vengeance. It is very remarkable, that as the nation of the Jews were a people uncommonly favored of God, particularly by the enjoyment of the perſonal miniſtry of Chriſt, and hearing the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; ſo, when they had filled up the meaſure of their iniquities, by rejecting him, the judgment that fell upon them was the moſt ſignal, and terrible, and laſting, that ever was inflicted on any people. In this they were an example of the fate of a whole world of ſinners; and, indeed, the deſtruction of Jeruſalem is deſcribed in ſuch terms as do naturally ſuggeſt to us the final judgment of the world, and teach us what to expect, "when the Lord Jeſus ſhall be "revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, taking vengeance "on them that know not God, and that obey not the goſ-"pel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Now the Saviour is in the poſture of a humble ſupplicant, ſtanding at the door of many hard hearts, and knocking, and aſking admiſſion. Now does he earneſtly beſeech you, by his mercies, to be reconciled to God; but then ſhall he put on the frowns and terrors of a judge; and how ſhall

they be able to lift up their eyes towards him, who now trample upon his love? See a repreſentation of this matter, Rev. vi. 14, 15, 16, 17. "And the heaven departed "as a ſcroll when it is rolled together; and every moun- "tain and iſland were moved out of their places: and the "kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, "and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every "bondman, and every freeman, hid themſelves in the "dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and ſaid to "the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from "the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the "wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is "come; and who ſhall be able to ſtand!" It is remarkable, that the wrath here ſpoken of, is called *the wrath of the Lamb.* Strange expreſſion indeed! but ſtrongly ſignifying, that his preſent meekneſs, and patience, and ſuffering, ſhall inflame and exaſperate his future vengeance. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, I would beſeech every ſinner in this aſſembly, to conſider the things that belong to his peace, that the ſame ſtrength and power of our Redeemer, that was evident in his ſuffering in our ſtead, that is evident in working out the ſalvation of his own people, ſhall alſo be evident in the judgment of his enemies. Pſal. ii. 11, 12. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with "trembling. Kiſs the Son, leſt he be angry, and ye periſh "from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: "Bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him."

In the 3d place, I would improve this ſubject, for the encouragement of ſinners to return to God through Chriſt. It was for this very end, that God laid help upon One that is mighty, and raiſed up a choſen One out of the folk. Is there, then, among you, an awakened ſinner, who trembles at the proſpect of Divine wrath, upon whoſe heart God, in his mercy, has carried home a conviction of his loſt ſtate, and who is crying out, *What ſhall I do to be ſaved!* Behold, here, the peace-ſpeaking blood of the Lamb of God! Behold, here, not only your ranſom paid, and juſtice fully ſatisfied, but a powerful, an Almighty Saviour, able to ſave to the uttermoſt, all that come unto God by him! He has gone through his work,

in the greatneſs of his ſtrength! He hath foiled your ſpiritual enemies, and made a ſhew of them openly, triumphing over them in his croſs! My brethren, there is the greater need earneſtly to intreat your attention to this, that a ſlothful, deſpondency, and diffidence of ſucceſs, is what keeps many ſinners from a hearty return to God. There is more of this in the hearts of many than they themſelves are aware of: I do not mean deſpair of mercy alone, but deſpair of recovery from a ſtate of ſin, of deliverance from the bondage of corruption, and attaining to the diſpoſition and character of God's children. Are there not many of you, my brethren, who, though you, in ſome meaſure, ſee the excellence and happineſs of a ſtate of favor with God, and holy conformity to his will, yet finding how ſtrongly you are wedded to the world, and its ſinful enjoyments, and knowing, by experience, the unſucceſsfulneſs of former reſolutions taken on in your own ſtrength, you have no hope of ſucceſs, and ſo, in a ſullen obſtinacy, refuſe to attempt what you think you cannot accompliſh? Do you not ſee, from what hath been ſaid, both your former error, and what is now the proper cure? You can do nothing of yourſelves; but through Chriſt ſtrengthening you, you may do all things. He is an Almighty Saviour: he is ſtronger than the ſtrong man who detains you in bondage: he is able to knock off the ſtrongeſt fetters, and let the priſoners go free. Wherefore, I beſeech you, my dear friends, as you value your everlaſting intereſt, that you do not ſit ſtill, and periſh, but ariſe, and be doing, and the Lord will be with you.

In the 4th place, the ſame inſtruction, with little difference, may be given to the people of God. As ſelf-righteouſneſs, and ſelf-confidence, are the ruling characters of the unregenerate: ſo they are diſeaſes never entirely cured in this world, even in the beſt, and lamentably prevalent in many of God's own children. As their work is to obtain a victory over their corruptions, and grow in the exerciſe of every Chriſtian grace, they often attempt both theſe too much in their own ſtrength. As the natural and unavoidable conſequence of this, they meet with frequent diſappointments; theſe make them ready to

ſit down in ſlothful careleſſneſs, and decline the ſtruggle to which they find themſelves unequal, nay, too often not without ſecret murmurings and complaints againſt God, as a hard maſter, requiring bricks, and giving no ſtraw; inſtead of concluding, from their unſucceſsfulneſs, that they muſt have taken their meaſures wrong, they conclude the attempt itſelf to be vain, and the work impracticable. But, my brethren, here is a truth, which not only the word of God every where teaches, but which almoſt every part of his Providence towards us is intended to ratify, *that in us dwelleth no good thing;* that we can hardly have too low an opinion of our own worth, or our own ſtrength; but, at the ſame time, that God is able and willing to perfect ſtrength in our weakneſs. He is able to uphold the weakeſt ſelf-denied Chriſtian in the midſt of the moſt dangerous temptations, though he often ſuffers the ſelf-ſufficient to fall before his enemies. Wherefore, my dear friends, believe in the Almighty power of your Redeemer; and I hope you will know, to your experience, that "he giveth power to the faint, and, to them that "have no might, he increaſeth ſtrength."

In the 5th place, ſuffer me to improve this ſubject, for the comfort and refreſhment of every diſconſolate and mourning ſoul. As weary and heavy laden ſinners are the perſons to whom the call of the goſpel is addreſſed, ſo ſurely it alſo ſpeaks peace to weary and heavy laden ſaints. This world was plainly deſigned as a place of trial and diſcipline, and not of complete reſt to the children of God. It often pleaſes him, in his ſovereign and holy Providence, not only to afflict them with outward trials, but to hide his face from them, and viſit them with diſtreſs of ſoul. May not all ſuch ſee, from what has been ſaid, that they are but conformed to their Redeemer; that they are but treading in the path which he hath ſanctified; and is it not "enough for the diſciple, that he be as his Maſ-"ter, and for the ſervant, that he be as his Lord?" It would be a great point gained, if we could but be convinced, that afflictions are what we muſt look for, and ſo not haſtily and raſhly conclude, that he is "rebuking "us in his wrath, and chaſtening us in his hot diſplea-

"ſure." Is it not comfortable, and is it not true, that Chriſt hath taken away the ſting of death, and of every ſuffering from his people, and left nothing but that correction which is healthful and neceſſary? Above all, ought you not to look to the power of your Redeemer, and his almighty ſtrength, as ſufficient to ſupport you now, and at laſt work your complete deliverance? Baniſh every thought that tends to repreſent your caſe, either as ſingular, to abate your ſenſe of the divine goodneſs, or as deſperate, to weaken your hands, in ſeeking relief; and make your requeſt to God, "with ſtrong crying and tears, "that he, as the God of hope, would fill you with all joy, "and peace in believing, that you may rejoice with joy "unſpeakable, and full of glory."

6th. I ſhall now conclude all, with an earneſt invitation to all intending communicants, to come to the table of the Lord, and, by faith, to feed upon the rich entertainment that is there provided for them. See here the price of your redemption; the evidence and ſecurity of your pardon; the ſeal of God's love to you; and the certain pledge of every neceſſary bleſſing. "It pleaſed the Fa-"ther, that in Chriſt ſhould all fulneſs dwell, and of his "fulneſs you may all receive, and grace for grace." His body, broken, is the bread of life, that muſt nouriſh your ſouls to their everlaſting ſtate. His blood, ſhed, is a never failing cordial to a broken ſpirit, and a moſt excellent refreſhment to the ſoul that pants in a parched wilderneſs. May the Lord himſelf meet with us, and bleſs us, viſit us with his gracious preſence, and make us joyful in his houſe of prayer. Amen.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

A

SERMON.

HEBREWS iii. 13.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin.

WE see many mysterious things in the frame of nature, and the course of Providence. But nothing can be more mysterious and wonderful than what we may often see in the state of our own hearts. When there is no present soliciting temptation, and when we consider, in a cool and deliberate manner, the consequences of vice and wickedness, even barely from the dictates of natural conscience, it seems surprizing, that, in any instance, we should yield to it; that we should be induced to break the peace of our own minds, and provoke the vengeance of an Almighty Judge; nay, to do so for a trifling, momentary, and uncertain satisfaction. But if it be unreasonable to offend God at all, and to take but a few steps in the paths of sin, how much more above measure astonishing is it, that men should adhere to their former mistakes, and should not open their eyes after repeated admonitions of their danger, and daily experience of their own folly!

I believe every body will be sensible, that many sinners, even setting aside the consideration of some of the most im-

portant religious truths, act in a manner so directly opposite to their own present interest as is not to be accounted for, without supposing them under an amazing degree of blindness and infatuation. This is to be resolved into *the deceitfulness of sin*, a circumstance on this great subject well worthy of our most serious attention.

In entering on the deceitfulness of sin, let us reflect a little on the meaning of the expression. Who is it that is deceived? It is the sinner himself. Does he need to be deceived? Is there not in us all a strong enough direct inclination to that which is evil, ready to burst asunder every restraining tie? There is so; and yet there is more in our danger than merely a propensity to sin. There is also a deceit and imposition which over reaches us, and insnares us into the commission of what, but for that mistake, we would have avoided or abhorred. There is very frequent mention made of this in scripture; many cautions against being deceived; and indeed all sin is represented as error and delusion, in which—a deceived heart hath turned us aside.

Again, if the sinner is deceived, who is it, or what is it that deceives him? Here we must observe, that when we speak of sin's being deceitful, it is not so much any thing without us, taking the advantage of our weakness, but it is the effect and evidence of the strength of corruption within us, which makes us see things in a wrong light, and draw unjust and pernicious consequences from them. Let us always remember, that the whole frame of nature, although it be the scene of temptation, and even the fuel of concupiscence, is faultless in itself; nay it presents us every where with lessons of piety and obedience to its Author. The mistake here arises wholly from ourselves. There is a remarkable difference between the deceitfulness of sin and deceit of any other kind; in worldly transactions, the person deceived is never supposed unfaithful to himself, but is imposed on by the superior art and cunning of the deceiver. But it is otherwise in spiritual matters, where the deceitfulness of sin is but another form of speech for the corruption and treachery of our own hearts. It is true, in some instances of delusion, there is

an activity of outward agents, if I may ſpeak ſo, the devil and wicked men, who uſe no little induſtry to ſeduce others, and lie in wait to deceive; but this, if I miſtake not, does not belong properly to the deceitfulneſs of ſin, which lies in the diſpoſition of our own hearts, and is what lays us open to their ſnares.

I ſhall only further obſerve, by way of introduction, that this ſubject is equally applicable to good men and bad. Both ought to dread, and both ought to be warned of the deceitfulneſs of ſin; it betrays good men into diſtreſs, as well as bad men into ruin.

In further diſcourſing on this ſubject, I ſhall,

I. Endeavor to open a little the chief branches of *the deceitfulness of sin.*

II. Conſider the duty founded upon it, of *exhorting one another daily.*

III. Make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject.

Firſt, then, I ſhall endeavor to open a little the chief branches of the deceitfulneſs of ſin: And I think the deceitfulneſs of ſin may be divided into theſe three general branches. 1. Its diſguiſing itſelf, and wholly concealing its nature. 2. Its forming excuſes for itſelf, and thereby extenuating its guilt. 3. Its inſinuating itſelf by degrees, and leading men on from the voluntary commiſſion of ſome ſins to the neceſſity of committing more.

1ſt, then, The deceitfulneſs of ſin appears from its diſguiſing itſelf, and wholly concealing its nature. Though the great lines of the law of God are written upon the conſcience in ſo ſtrong and legible characters, that it is difficult wholly to efface them, yet it is plain that men have often brought this about to a ſurpriſing degree. The Pſalmiſt David, ſenſible how often ſin is concealed from our own view, exclaims, Pſal. xix. 12. "Who can under-"ſtand his errors! cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults." What ingenious reaſonings do men often uſe with their own minds to prove the lawfulneſs of what inclination leads them to, either with reſpect to profit or pleaſure? When the heart pleads the cauſe, the underſtanding is a very favorable judge. Every one may find a great num-

ber of examples of this in his own experience, and may daily see the unhappy effects of it in others.

For the better illustrating of this truth, that sin is often wholly concealed even from the man in whom it dwells, be pleased to attend to the following observations: (1.) Sometimes it shows itself in the prevalence of loose principles. I am sorry to say, that we live in an age in which infidelity of the grossest kind, is spreading its poison among all ranks and degrees of men. But why is it so readily entertained? Because it either sets men at liberty from the ties of conscience, and a future reckoning altogether; or greatly narrows the extent, and weakens the obligations of the law of God. How sweet and palatable to the corrupt mind is every thing that removes restraints, and suffers the sinner to walk in the ways of his own heart, and the sight of his own eyes? It is not reason, but inclination, that makes proselytes to these destructive doctrines. The truth is, would you reason impartially, you would conclude, that the principles must be false, which tend to set men at ease in their crimes. When therefore the arguments in their favor are so easily admitted, we have just ground to affirm that it is owing to the deceitfulness of sin.

(2.) If we proceed from principles to practice, and from generals to particulars, we shall find how sin disguises itself, and hides its deformity from our view. It never appears in its own proper and genuine dress, nor loves to be called by its proper name. Thus excess and intemperance is called, and unhappily thought by many, a social disposition and good fellowship. Pride and unchristian resentment, is called honor, spirit, and dignity of mind. Vain pomp, luxury, and extravagance, are styled taste, elegance, and refinement. Sordid avarice, and love of money, calls itself prudence, frugality, and good management. Levity, folly, and even obscenity, is often called innocent liberty, chearfulness, and good humor. So great is the deceit, and so secure does the sin lye under its disguise, that a minister may preach with the utmost severity against these several vices, and the guilty persons

hear with patience or approbation, and never once think of applying it to themſelves.

This deceit diſcovers itſelf alſo by its counterpart. How common is it to ſtigmatize and diſparage true piety and goodneſs by the moſt opprobrious titles. Tenderneſs of conſcience, is, by many, reproached under the character of preciſeneſs and narrowneſs of mind. Zeal againſt ſin, and fidelity to the ſouls of others, is called ſourneſs, moroſeneſs, and ill nature. There was never yet a faithful reprover, from Lot in Sodom to the preſent day, but he ſuffered under the reproach and ſlander of thoſe who would not be reclaimed. I might eaſily run over many more inſtances in both theſe kinds; for, to ſay the truth, the whole ſtrain of faſhionable converſation is often nothing elſe but an illuſion put upon the mind, that it may loſe its horror of vice; and it is greatly to be lamented, that this is done with ſo much ſucceſs. In many caſes, young perſons eſpecially, are inſpired with a hatred and averſion at true and undefiled religion, and that under the moſt plauſible pretences. Many, my brethren, there are who are far from thinking it themſelves, and yet fall under the denunciation of the Prophet Iſaiah, v. 20,—24. "Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter. Wo unto them that are wiſe in their own eyes, and prudent in their own ſight. Wo unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of ſtrength to mingle ſtrong drink: which juſtify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteouſneſs of the righteous from him. Therefore, as the fire devoureth the ſtubble, and the flame conſumeth the chaff, ſo their root ſhall be as rottenneſs, and their bloſſom ſhall go up as duſt; becauſe they have caſt away the law of the Lord of Hoſts, and deſpiſed the word of the Holy One of Iſrael."

(3.) But the higheſt degree of this branch of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, is, when it not only puts on a decent and lawful appearance, but aſſumes the garb of eminent piety and worth. There is nothing impoſſible in this. As Satan ſometimes transforms himſelf into an angel of light,

ſo ſome of the greateſt ſins will take the name, and arrogate the honor, of the moſt diſtinguiſhed virtues. I do not here mean the caſe of groſs hypocriſy; that is foreign from the preſent ſubject. Hypocrites know their own inſincerity well enough, and only put on an appearance of piety, to deceive others. But even when there is no known or deliberate hypocriſy, ſin may inſinuate itſelf under the appearance of the moſt important duties. Men may indulge the moſt hateful paſſions with the greater liberty, when they think they are doing what is acceptable to God.

The croſs of our bleſſed Maſter is full fraught with inſtruction of every kind. It gives us, particularly, a ſtriking example of what I have now ſaid. His enemies, who perſecuted him with unrelenting malice through his life, and at laſt prevailed to have him hanged on a tree, did it, ſome, no doubt, from a pretended, but many of them, from a miſguided zeal for religion. He was crucified as a deceiver, and a blaſphemer; and that in this they were miſled, appears from the language of his prayer for them on the croſs, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what "they do." What a conviction ſhould this give us of the deceitfulneſs of ſin; that the greateſt ſin that ever was committed on earth, was yet conſidered, by the guilty, as a duty!

Let us alſo conſider our Saviour's remarkable prediction on the ſame ſubject, and how often it hath been fulfilled: John xvi. 2. "They ſhall put you out of the ſyna-"gogues! yea, the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth "you, will think that he doth God ſervice." My brethren, think a little on the many dreadful perſecutions which good men have endured for conſcience ſake; the terrible tortures they have been expoſed to, in which the utmoſt invention of the human mind has been employed to aggravate their diſtreſs. Think, in particular, of the horrible tribunal of inquiſition, which is, to this day, in full authority in countries not very diſtant; and does it not inſpire you with the higheſt deteſtation of the bloody tyrants? But there is another reflection not ſo frequently made, yet at leaſt equally proper. How great is the deceit-

fulneſs of ſin in the human heart, that can make men ſuppoſe that ſuch atrocious crimes are acceptable to God? Yet they certainly do ſo. Neither would it be poſſible for them, ſo entirely, to diveſt themſelves of every ſentiment of humanity, if they were not inflamed by the rage of bigotry and falſe zeal. Let not any imagine, that theſe are dreadful crimes, but which they are not in the leaſt danger of. We ought to maintain the greateſt watchfulneſs and jealouſy over our own ſpirits. It may very eaſily, and does very frequently happen, that an apparent zeal for religion is more than half compoſed of pride, malice, envy, or revenge.

Nor is this all. In the above caſes, by the treachery of the human heart, ſins are changed into duties, and, in many others, every day, duties are changed into ſins, by the perverſion of the principle from which they ought to flow. Many a ſober, temperate perſon oweth his regularity more to a luſt of gold, than to any ſenſe of duty, and obedience to God. The deſire of praiſe, or the fear of reproach, is many times a reſtraint more powerful than the apprehenſion of eternal judgment. Men may put one duty alſo in the place of another, and by that means convert it into ſin. Nay, with regard to all our duties, we may be tempted to place that truſt and dependence on them which is only due to our Redeemer's perfect righteouſneſs; and, inſtead of acts of obedience, make them idols of jealouſy before God.

How great then the deceitfulneſs of ſin, which is capable of putting on ſo many and ſo artful diſguiſes, and even to counterfeit true piety, which ſtands in the moſt immediate and direct oppoſition to it! There are more ways than I can poſſibly enumerate, by which men deceive themſelves, and become obſtinate and incorrigible in what is evil, by miſtaking it for what is good. Juſtly does the Apoſtle, in this paſſage, warn Chriſtian's againſt being hardened; for if ſin can hardly be reſtrained, even by the moſt conſtant vigilance, and the moſt ſteady reſiſtance, what progreſs will it not make, what ſtrength muſt it not acquire, when it is approved and cheriſhed, nay, when it

is profecuted with all that care and attention which ought to have been employed for its utter deſtruction?

2. In the ſecond place, The deceitfulneſs of ſin, appears from its forming excuſes for itſelf, and thereby extenuating its guilt. That it is natural for ſinners to form excuſes for themſelves, and endeavor to extenuate their guilt, daily experience is a ſufficient proof. Nay, it is uſual to obſerve, how able, and ingenious, perſons, otherwiſe of no great capacity, are in this art; even children diſcover the greateſt quickneſs and facility in it, and are no ſooner challenged for any thing that is amiſs, than they are ready to produce an apology. The diſpoſition, indeed, ſeems to be hereditary, and to have been handed down to us from the firſt parents of the human race. On their being challenged for their diſobedience, each of them confeſſes the fact, but immediately adds an excuſe, Gen. iii. 11, 12, 13. "Haſt thou eaten of the tree, where-"of I commanded thee, that thou ſhouldeſt not eat; And "the man ſaid, the woman whom thou gaveſt to be with "me, ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the "Lord God ſaid unto the woman, what is this that thou "haſt done? And the woman ſaid, the ſerpent beguiled "me, and I did eat." You will eaſily be ſenſible, that it is impoſſible for me to enumerate the ſeveral excuſes, or diſtinct alleviating circumſtances, that may be pleaded in favor of particular ſins, becauſe theſe are infinitely various. I intend, therefore, only to mention ſome of the chief conſiderations that are offered by pretended reaſoners, or have a ſecret influence upon the mind of the ſinner; and which leſſen the impreſſion of the evil of ſin in general.

(1.) One excuſe, which, however weak, has no ſmall influence in ſetting men's minds at eaſe, in the commiſſion of ſin, is no other than the commonneſs of it; and that there are multitudes of others in the like condition. It is wonderful to think what boldneſs ſinners often derive from this circumſtance, and how hard it is to perſuade them of the danger of what is common and generally practiſed. Even good men are often carried away with prevailing and epidemical ſins. We may take the illuſtration of this from any particular ſin. How ready are men

to think, and even to speak, in the following manner? If this be a sin, I am sure I am not singular in it; there are many others guilty as well as I. They seem to look upon the practice of others, as a sort of support and justification of their own conduct.

But, my brethren, I beseech you to consider how delusive and dangerous these thoughts are to your immortal souls. If any credit is to be given to the scripture representation, the human race, in general, is under guilt: and therefore, the commonness, nay, the universality of any practice, is not sufficient to give it a sanction, as lawful and safe. Will the law of an unchangeable God be altered or abated in favor of his apostate creatures, because of their number? Is there such a number of offenders, as to be able to make head against their almighty Creator? Sometimes, indeed, the transgressors of human laws are so numerous, as to be formidable to their very judges; but no such thing can take place here. Or will it, in truth, be any consolation to the sufferers in hell, that they have society in their torment? Were a great number of malefactors to be executed together, would this alleviate the punishment to any one of them? I apprehend it would rather increase it, since they would, in a good measure, feel each others sufferings; as it certainly would add greater horror to the sight. Wherefore, my dear brethren, I beseech every one of you, to consider the necessity of reconciliation and peace with God, and that it is not less important and necessary to you, for the multitudes you see around you so fast asleep in security and sloth.

(2.) Another excuse that men often make for their sins, is, that they are comparatively small. When they see, think, or hear of the monstrous and atrocious crimes of others, they are ready to bless themselves in their security, and to reckon upon their less degree of guilt, as a species of innocence. Believe it, my brethren, I have found, with concern, persons in a dangerous sickness, or the prospect of death, taking comfort to themselves, and mentioning, with much satisfaction, that they were not so bad as some others; that they had never committed this or the other heinous crime; that they had never done as this or

the other desperate profligate had done, with whom they were acquainted. To all such we may justly apply the words of the apostle, 2 Cor. x. 12. "For we dare not "make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves "with some that commend themselves: but they, mea- "suring themselves by themselves, and comparing them- "selves amongst themselves, are not wise."

There is a wonderful propensity in the proud spirit of man, to gratify itself by comparison with others. Comparison, indeed, is the very fuel of pride; for of what are we proud, but of something in which it is supposed we excel. Is there any thing more common in conversation, when any instance of the sin or folly of others is narrated, than for the hearers, every one, to take the benefit of it to himself, and to say, I am sure I should never have done so and so, had I been in his case. Scarce any man finds fault with another for his conduct in his station, without blazoning and displaying his own real or imagined excellence. I do not say, that good men are wholly free from this fault; yet, as the principles of sin and grace are directly opposite, in general, the same views that make a bad man proud, tend to make a good man humble. The gross sins of others, which incline careless persons to glory, that they are free from the charge, often tend to discover to the Christian the sinfulness of his nature, which is capable of such impiety. They fill him with humble adoration, and thankfulness to that gracious God, who only maketh him to differ. He knows, that had he been left to himself, he might have exceeded the most abandoned profligate within the compass of his knowledge.

Let me therefore, my brethren, caution you and myself against all excuses drawn from comparison in any form. For, not to mention how ready we are to mistake and be partial to ourselves in making the comparison: not to mention that, though we were ever so impartial, as the hearts of others are not open to us, nor the motives of their conduct, we cannot make it with certainty, I only insist, that all comparisons, whether they be just or unjust, are unspeakably pernicious. It is not your being better

or worſe than others, that will juſtify you before God, or be the matter of inquiry at the laſt day. You will not then be aſked, whether you were as profane a blaſphemer as ſuch a perſon? as great a liar as another? as great a drunkard as another? as great a whoremonger as another? No. You muſt be weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary, and all that are there found wanting, ſhall be caſt into the lake of fire. You may leave it to a wiſe and righteous God to proportion the ſeverity of his judgment to the atrociouſneſs of the ſinner's guilt. "But except a man be "born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God." A man may be drowned in five fathom water, as well as in five thouſand; and, therefore, let none fooliſhly flatter themſelves with the hope of ſecurity, even though they really ſee many (to ſpeak in the language of ſcripture) "tenfold "more the children of hell than themſelves."

(3.) Sinners are apt to look for another ſource of excuſes for their ſins in themſelves. They are ſtrongly inclined to make a merit of any actions they have done that are materially good, and think that ſome indulgence is due to their faults and miſcarriages on that account. They ſet their good works and their faults, as it were, in oppoſite columns, as if they intended, in that manner, to ſtrike the balance. There is very much of this diſpoſition in the natural unenlightened mind. We find many ſentiments ſimilar to this in the heathen world. 'Every man,' ſays a certain author, 'has ſome virtues, and ſome faults; he 'that hath more virtues than faults, is a good man; and 'he that hath more faults than virtues, is a bad man.' I am ſenſible there might be ſome juſtice in ſuch a compariſon, after a perſon has really been brought to the ſervice of God upon genuine principles. It might then ſerve to ſhew whether God or the world hath moſt of our prevailing love, and our habitual ſervice. But this rule is highly pernicious, when an ignorant or vitious man endeavors to apply it: for, firſt of all, theſe very actions, which they ſuppoſe to be good, not flowing from a real principle of obedience to God, are falſely reckoned virtues in them. O that ſelf-righteous perſons would but faithfully examine the motives from which many of their boaſted virtues

flow! The more they knew of themſelves, and their own real character, the leſs would they be inclined to glory in its excellence and perfection. It is certain, that even in the world, the more a man preſumes to commend himſelf, the leſs others are diſpoſed to eſteem him; and is it not ſtrange, that the ſelf-juſtification, which is inſufferable to our fellow creatures, ſhould be the foundation of our hope before a holy and heart-ſearching God?

But, beſides, I beſeech your attention to the following circumſtance: even the falſe ſuppoſition, juſt now mentioned, proceeds upon an abſolute miſtake of the nature of moral obligation. There is no proper merit in the obedience of a creature, neither hath it, in the leaſt degree, any title or tendency to extinguiſh the guilt of crimes. If eſteem, love, and obedience, all in the higheſt degree, be truly and properly due unto God, no reward can be pleaded for on account of the performance, much leſs can it have the effect of procuring pardon where duty hath been neglected. Let me beg of you to reflect upon a matter of experience, which is but ſeldom attended to. Does the general goodneſs of a man's character incline even the world to indulge him in more bad actions than another? It does juſt the contrary. A man, who hath been eminent in piety during a long courſe of years, if he goes aſtray in any one inſtance, will be more deeply reproached, and his character will ſuffer more by it, I may even ſay, it will ſuffer an hundred-fold more for the ſame action, than the character of another whoſe conduct has been more imperfect and unequal.

I look upon it as the duty of a miniſter to bend his whole force againſt a diſpoſition to ſelf-righteouſneſs. And, indeed, whether we take it from ſcripture or reaſon, we ſhall ſee that the hope of a ſinner muſt ariſe not from extenuation, but confeſſion; not from human merit, but from the divine mercy. This is ſo plain, that had men but any real and juſt convictions of their obligations and duty to God, ſuch a plea would never come into their minds. Suppoſe any perſon were challenged for a debt which he was really owing, and he ſhould anſwer in this manner, It is very true, I have not paid this; but I paid

a debt to you at such a time, and another at such a time, and a third at such a time; would it not be natural for the other to reply, True indeed; but were not all these debts separately due? will your paying one discharge you from another? is not this as much due now as any of the rest were before? If therefore you will give the same justice to your Maker, you expect from another, you must confess that a whole life of perfect and spotless obedience would do just nothing at all to extinguish the guilt of the least sin. Be not therefore so foolish as to rest your hope on that self-righteousness, which, in truth, is no better than filthy rags, and however excellent and perfect it were, could have no effect in procuring the forgiveness of sin.

(4.) There are some to be found, who endeavor to excuse their actual transgressions, as being no more than the necessary effects of original sin. This we find frequently done by those who are no friends to religion in general, and, perhaps, believe as little of the reality of original as the guilt of actual sin. In such, therefore, it is no more than a pretence, that they may rid themselves of the apprehension of both. But there are also some who do not seem to be enemies in principle to the truths of the gospel, who yet are very ready to excuse themselves for particular sins, by laying the blame upon their nature in general. It is my nature, they will say; I have so strong a disposition to it, that I cannot help it. Thus they seem to sit quite easy under the dominion of sin, and, by giving up all hope of overcoming it, are led to forbear all endeavors to resist it.

On this I cannot help observing, again, how opposite the principles of sin and holiness are. The sin of our nature, which, in true penitents, is matter of humiliation and sorrow, is often produced by others, as an extenuation of their crimes. See how the Psalmist David expresses himself, Psal. li. 5. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; "and in sin did my mother conceive me." These words were not spoken by way of alleviation, but confession and aggravation. In the same spirit does the apostle Paul speak in a great part of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the

Romans, particularly verſes 14,——24. "For we know "that the law is ſpiritual; but I am carnal, ſold under ſin. "For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that "do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that "which I would not, I conſent unto the law, that it is "good. Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but ſin that "dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my "fleſh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is preſent with "me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which "I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, "it is no more I that do it, but ſin that dwelleth in me. I "find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is pre- "ſent with me: for I delight in the law of God after the "inward man. But I ſee another law in my members, "warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me "into captivity to the law of ſin, which is in my mem- "bers. O wretched man that I am! who ſhall deliver "me from the body of this death?

That there is ſomething myſterious in the firſt occaſion and conveyance of original ſin, on which captious perſons may raiſe cavils, to perplex themſelves and others, I readily allow. But, after all they can ſay, it is certain, both from ſcripture and experience, that all actual ſin is not only perſonal but voluntary. Is there any perſon, who will dare to maintain, in the face of his Supreme Judge, that he is laid under compulſion, or an irreſiſtible neceſſity, to think, ſpeak, or do what is wrong? Does any man commit ſin, but from his own choice? Or is he hindered from the performance of any duty to which he is ſincerely and heartily inclined? If this were indeed the caſe, it would not be true, what we are told in the ſacred oracles, that God will be "juſt when he ſpeaketh, and clear when "he judgeth."

I muſt alſo obſerve, that, upon the plan of the goſpel, the force of this excuſe is entirely taken away; becauſe the rennovation of our natures is there aſcribed to the power and energy of divine grace. Though we are not able to reform our natures, God is able to renew them. Though we cannot reſiſt corruption, God is able to ſub-

due it. Our weak and helpleſs ſtate by nature, is ſo far from being a proper excuſe for ſin, that a juſt and humbling ſenſe of it is the very firſt ſtep towards a recovery. "Of ourſelves, we are not able to do any good thing, but "through Chriſt ſtrengthening us we may do all things." We are exhorted to pray for the influences of the Spirit, in the ſure hope of acceptance: "Aſk, and ye ſhall re-"ceive; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be "opened unto you." So that, on the prevailing of ſin, we have juſt reaſon to take the whole blame upon ourſelves, and to ſay, "We are not ſtraitened in God, but "ſtraitened in our own bowels."

(5.) In the laſt place, ſome are bold enough to excuſe their ſins, as being only the effects of the irreſiſtible will of God, who hath decreed whatſoever comes to paſs; ſome in a more artful and covered way; and ſome more openly and explicitly make uſe of God's abſolute predetermination of every event, as taking away the guilt of their voluntary actions. This hath been a very old excuſe. It was the ſpirit of that language you find, Ezek. xxxiii. 10. "There-"fore, O thou ſon of man, ſpeak unto the houſe of Iſrael, "thus ye ſpeak, ſaying, if our tranſactions and our ſins be "upon us, and we pine away in them, how ſhould we "then live?" The ſame thing is mentioned by the apoſtle Paul, Rom. ix. 19. "Thou wilt ſay then unto me, "why doth he yet find fault? for who hath reſiſted his "will?" This infamous and blaſphemous excuſe is not only often made for particular ſins, but is made a pillow of ſloth in general, and ſinners lay themſelves aſleep upon it in ſecurity, ſaying, if it be the will of God, they ſhould be ſaved, the event is infallible, let them take ever ſo deſperate a courſe; and if otherwiſe, it is impoſſible for them to oppoſe his irreſiſtible decree.

In order to oppoſe this profane perverſion of divine truth, let me put you in mind, what ſin and folly it muſt be in us, to ſet the nature of God at variance with his revealed will, or one declaration of his in oppoſition to another. It is from the ſcriptures alone, that you learn God's ſupreme dominion and appointment of every event

And is it not certain, that the ſame ſcriptures do lay the guilt or ſinfulneſs of every action to the ſinner's charge? Does not God abſolutely refuſe, nay, in infinite condeſcenſion, he ſolemnly proteſts againſt having it imputed to himſelf. Let the guilty hear and tremble, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in "the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from "his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil "ways; for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael!" And again, James i. 13. "Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted "with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Perhaps, ſome will ſay, we cannot reconcile the certainty of events with the freedom of actions, or the imputation of guilt. But what is this, but ſaying we are not able to fathom or comprehend the perfections of an infinite God? And is this any cauſe of wonder? It would not be the true God, if you could ſearch him out; it would not be the Almighty, if you could find him to perfection. "It is higher than hea-"ven, what canſt thou do? deeper than hell, what canſt thou "know? The meaſure thereof is longer than the earth, "and broader than the ſea."

Surely, my brethren, it is manifeſt, that the ſame God, to whom all his works are known from the beginning of the world, and who rules by his power, for ever, hath eſtabliſhed a neceſſary connection between the means and the end, between the cauſe and effect. And, as it would be altogether madneſs in common life, to ſit ſtill and forbear activity and diligence, under pretence of its being impoſſible to hinder or alter the will of God; ſo it is equally mad and impious, to lay the blame of our ſinful hearts and inclinations on the appointment of God. He can and doth control and over-rule, by his ſovereign providence, all his creatures, and all their actions, in a ſubſerviency to his own glory; but, as to the ſinfulneſs of every deed, the ſinner alone is chargeable with it, and, in the day of judgment, the ſinner alone muſt anſwer for it.

Before I proceed to the third branch of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, I muſt beg your attention to a few obſervations on what hath been already ſaid. And,

1ſt, You may obſerve how various and involved, and how deep-laid the excuſes for ſin are. The ways of the world, the general prevalence of ſin, and many of theſe very circumſtances which ought to make us dread its influence, and fill us with abhorrence of it, are frequently made uſe of to extenuate its guilt. The corrupt inclination of our hearts, which is the ſource of all ſin, and may be ſaid to be the eſſence of ſin, is often made uſe of to excuſe or palliate its effects, as the badneſs of the tree for the ſourneſs of the grapes. How ill qualified are we to judge fairly on ſuch a ſubject? We are partial in our own cauſe, and give an unjuſt deciſion from our relation to the pannel. Down then with the reaſonings of the carnal mind. Suſpect them, dread them, ſhut your ears againſt them. What reaſon is there to ſit down in ſilence, and humbly acquieſce in the account given us of our character, and ſtate, by a God of infinite holineſs? There is no error to blind his judgment, no intereſt to bias his inclination, and there is no equal who may contend or enter into judgment with him.

2dly, You may ſee that the excuſes for ſin, are not only inſufficient, but deeply criminal. In the form they aſſume, they may appear plauſible; but, when they are ſtripped of their diſguiſe, they will appear to be horrible. The immediate pretence may appear to have nothing very atrocious in it; but when they are traced to their ſource, they will be found to take their riſe from the moſt malignant infidelity or atheiſm in the heart. You ſee, from what has been ſaid, that many excuſes for ſin, at laſt, land in laying the blame upon God himſelf. All the encouragement we take in ſin, from the divine patience, all our abuſe or perverſion of the gifts of nature, or the courſe of providence, lands ultimately here. Let us therefore pray, that it may pleaſe God to open our eyes on the wonders of his law, on the riches of his grace, and the greatneſs of his power. Let us confeſs, that "to us belongeth "ſhame and confuſion of face; but to our God belongeth "mercy." Let us adopt the words of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xix. 12. "Who can underſtand his errors? Cleanſe thou "me from ſecret faults."

3. I proceed, now, to the third and laſt branch of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, viz. Its inſinuating nature, by which it leads men on, in an inſenſible manner, from one degree of wickedneſs to a higher, and, after the voluntary commiſſion of ſome ſins, lays them under a ſort of neceſſity of committing more. I think it is probable that the Apoſtle had this particularly in his view in the text, where he ſays, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called, to-day; leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* And certain it is, my brethren, that wicked men do not ſee the whole courſe they are to run at one view, but are drawn in by little and little. Take the moſt abandoned ſinner in this guilty world, and there was a time of his life when he would have trembled to think of the crimes which he afterwards committed. Thus Hazael, King of Syria, when he was told by the prophet Eliſha, of the unnatural barbarity and cruelty he would be guilty of among the children of Iſrael, he could not believe ſo ill of himſelf, but anſwered, with a kind of abhorrence, "What, is "thy ſervant a dog, that he ſhould do this great thing?" But ſuch is the nature of ſin, that it carries men away, if they yield to it, infinitely farther then they themſelves intended. We find this taken notice of by moral writers in every age and country. Many of the ancients uſed to repreſent it by a very expreſſive ſimilitude, viz. that the way of vice lies down hill; ſo that if you take but a few ſteps, the motion is ſoon accelerated, and becomes ſo violent and impetuous, that it is impoſſible for you to reſiſt it.

This is certainly a circumſtance, with reſpect to the nature of ſin, which lies at the foundation of practical religion, and to which I would particularly intreat the attention of the younger part of my audience. Neither is it unſuitable to perſons of any character, as it will contribute to enforce, upon their minds, a ſenſe of the neceſſity of conſtant vigilance, and of conſtant prayer. In order to repreſent the matter to you in the ſtronger light, I ſhall endeavor to lay before you ſome of the chief ſteps and gradations by which a ſinner is brought into a hardened ſtate; and ſhow how naturally, and in a manner neceſſarily, they lead him forward from one to another.

(1.) Men enter and initiate themselves in a vitious practice by smaller sins. Though every sin hath that malignity in it that it deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come; yet there are some sins, which, in themselves, as well as from several circumstances which attend them, are far more heinous in the sight of God than others. These are too alarming to the conscience of a young sinner; and, therefore, he only ventures upon such as are smaller at first. I hope you will not think it too minute or trifling, if I mention that every particular kind of vice creeps in in this gradual manner. Many have begun to steal, with taking away things without their parents knowledge, from their own house, thinking there could be little fault in this; and then picked up small things, perhaps, from people of better rank, saying to themselves, they will never be the worse of it, they can easily spare it; but time has perfected them in their trade, till they ended their days upon a scaffold. Some have begun with little arts of equivocation, and concealing the truth, who, in time, came to boldness and obstinacy in gross falsehood. And many have begun with levity of carriage, and vanity of dress, who have ended in lust, whoredom, and open prostitution. My brethren, though we are all born in sin, and powerfully inclined to that which is evil, from our first entrance into the world; yet we have also a witness for God in our own consciences. There seems to be some reluctance in the first commission of sin; some sorrow and regret for departing innocence. It is a saying of one of the heathens, "No "man becomes all of a sudden very wicked!" or, if I may use the expression, is made perfect in sin. It usually takes some time, and is carried on by progress and improvement, though some, alas! make wonderful proficiency in it, and advance at a very great pace. These lesser sins, then, are the introduction and preparation for what afterwards shall follow; they begin the attack upon conscience, which, at last, ends in a total overthrow and defeat.

(2.) Let us now follow the sinner to the next stage of his unhappy course. Having once begun in the ways of sin, he ventures upon something greater and more daring;

his courage grows with his experience; and he gives himself more liberty to walk in the ways of his own heart, and the sight of his own eyes. Now, sins of a deeper dye do not look so frightful as before. The reason of this is plain, or rather there are many reasons which concur in producing this effect. Custom makes every thing familiar, even to despising the authority of God, and counteracting the strongest obligations. Sinners, after some apprenticeship to this infamous trade commit such sins as lay waste the conscience, and offer the greatest violence to their own minds; these still lead forward to others, and to every new transgression, if I may speak so, they are driven by a stronger inclination, and with-held by a weaker resistance. No sin comes by itself alone, but stands in close connection with many others. Some sins teach us how to commit others, as well as afford an opportunity to do it. I have heard of a servant who went into an apartment with no other intention than to gratify appetite, by making free with some sweat-meats, but happening to see something very valuable lying open, which might be easily concealed, could not resist the temptation, but commenced thief, and, come, at last, to a miserable end. Many sins also bring others after them, as excuses to cover them. So that no person, who once breaks over the limits of clear and unquestionable duty, knows how far he may be carried before he returns back, or rather whether he may not be so deeply involved, as never to return at all. This leads me to observe,

(3.) That open sins soon throw a man into the hands of ungodly companions. This effect is necessary, because they determine his character; and, according to the old observation, those of like disposition, by a natural and powerful instinct, are led to associate together. No sooner do men begin to take liberties in their conduct, than they begin to shun the society of good men; the presence of such is a restraint upon them; their example is a reproof to them, and awakens any principle of conscience, which yet remains unsubdued, to reproach and sting them; whereas, in society like themselves, they are greatly emboldened, by seeing vice practised, and by hearing it justi-

fied. Behold the ſinner, then, with corrupt communication as well as corrupt inclination! The danger of this we are warned of by the apoſtle Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 33. "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good "manners." As united fires burn the fiercer and the ſtronger; ſo a ſinful ſociety improves and grows in impiety, and every member joins his brother's pollution to his own. It is not eaſy to ſay, how much profane companions are inſtrumental in reciprocally undoing one another. But ſurely if thoſe, otherwiſe virtuous, are often in danger of being led away with the error of the wicked, much more muſt they who are themſelves ſo diſpoſed, and are every whit as ready to follow a bad advice or example, as others are to give it.

I cannot forbear adding upon this ſubject, that ſeriouſly diſpoſed perſons are as much afraid of the ſociety of looſe perſons, as they are impatient of theirs. This makes the ſeparation ſtill more complete. Andeven when they are occaſionally joined, the fear of caſting their pearls before ſwine, who may trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend them, often ſhuts their mouths. It prevents them from giving that ſalutary inſtruction, and uſeful admonition, which their heart might dictate, or the neceſſity of the caſe might require. I confeſs, my brethren, when I conſider the unſpeakable advantages for true piety, which ariſe from the relation, the company, or the friendſhip of eminent Chriſtians, it fills me with the deepeſt concern for thoſe unhappy perſons, who, by their conduct, and circumſtances, are neceſſarily deprived of every thing of this kind, nay, are daily expoſed to all the contrary ſnares. I dare ſay, not a few in this aſſembly will bear witneſs, as I deſire to do with inward gratitude to God, what infinite benefit ariſes from the ſociety of the excellent ones of the earth; to have been inſtructed and trained up by pious parents in the fear of God; to have had your lot caſt in a family which was a houſe of prayer; to have the faithful admonitions of a truly conſcientious friend; and to have the daily edifying, reſtraining, comforting, animating example of an eminent Chriſtian, as

well as a ſhare in his fervent prayers. Nay, I will ſay more, the very precious remembrance of ſuch, after they have entered into reſt, whether parents, children, friends, or neighbours, has the nobleſt and happieſt effect in reproving our ſloth, and ſtirring us up to be "followers of "them, who, through faith and patience, do now inherit "the promiſes." How miſerable thoſe who are wholly ignorant of every ſuch privilege! How deceitful is ſin, which daily adminiſters the moſt deadly poiſon, and, at the very ſame time, cloſes up the way on every ſide, and debars the infected victim from every mean that might contribute to his cure!

(4.) In the next ſtage, the ſinner begins to feel the force of habit and inveterate cuſtom. The frequent repetition of acts of ſin conſtitutes a habit. How powerful this is, and hard to be overcome, experience is a daily ſtanding proof. We are warned of the danger of habitual wickedneſs in many paſſages of ſcripture, particularly Jer. xii. 5. "If thou haſt run with the footmen, and they "have wearied thee, then how canſt thou contend with "horſes? and if, in the land of peace, wherein thou truſt-"edſt, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the "ſwelling of Jordan?" Chap. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethi-"opian change his ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? then "may ye alſo do good, that are accuſtomed to do evil." Nature itſelf, in this, as in many other inſtances, is full of ſpiritual inſtruction. Habits of any indifferent kind, when once eſtabliſhed, can hardly be overcome even by the greateſt effort of reſolution; even any motion of the body, or any particular word or phraſe in diſcourſe, if once they have taken place by cuſtom, are hardly ever laid down. But, it muſt be obſerved, that habits of ſin are not only infinitely more hurtful than habits of a common kind, but they are alſo much more obſtinate. They fall in with the bent and diſpoſition of corrupt nature; and, therefore, are like a double cord, not eaſily broken.

Behold then the ſinner rooted and ſettled in an evil way! Before, it might have been expected, that an awful diſpenſation of providence, or the convincing demonſtration of the word of God, might have had an effect upon him;

but now, though it is ſtill poſſible, it becomes leſs and leſs probable. A tree, when it is newly planted, may be eaſily removed, or may be overturned by a blaſt of wind; but, when once it has ſpread its roots in the ground, and long kept its poſſeſſion, the moſt violent tempeſt may bend its top a little, but cannot ſhake its firm foundations. So the ſinner, that has been long habituated to wickedneſs, and confirmed by a long courſe of time, will ſtand even the ſtorms of affliction, and, if they do bend his haughty ſpirit, yet they will not break his ſtubborn heart. I do not mean to ſet bounds to the almighty power and ſovereign grace of God. He, no doubt, may, and, in ſome inſtances, has pluckt the moſt advanced ſinners as brands out of the fire. But theſe inſtances are few and uncommon, for ſome of the great ends of his government. It is not the ordinary way of his dealing with us; and he hath ſufficiently warned us againſt truſting to it. He hath threatened to make the ſinner feel the natural conſequence of obſtinacy, by ceaſing to ſtrive with him, and giving him up to the luſts of his own heart.

It is an awful, but, uſeful leſſon which young perſons may learn from what they ſee in the world about them. Theſe who have been long habituated to idleneſs, what a hopeleſs thing is it to attempt to bring them to apply? Thoſe who have been long habituated to drunkenneſs and intemperance, or ſenſuality of any kind, we ought not to ſay they are inclined to it, but they are compelled to it by the irreſiſtible calls of theſe appetites which they are no longer able to control. All who obſerve them, are ſo ſenſible of it, that they conſider it, as in vain to ſpeak to them, and think they may juſt as well ſpeak to the wind or the ſtorm: nay, we may often perceive the poor unhappy wretches themſelves ſenſible in ſome meaſure, of their captivity, though unable to break the chains that bind them. Some drunkards have been known to be filled with the deepeſt vexation, and ready to tear their own fleſh, on reflection of their beaſtly condition, and yet drawn, by an irreſiſtible force, to the next temptation——Nothing can ſet in a clearer light the deceitfulneſs of ſin, than comparing the ſtrength of habits, with the ſlow and ſilent manner in

which they steal on. One single act of sin seems nothing; but one after another imperceptibly strengthens the disposition, and enslaves the unhappy criminal beyond hope of recovery.

(5.) The next stage in a sinner's course, is, to lose the sense of shame, and sin openly and boldly. Sin is, in itself, a dishonorable thing, which hath, in many instances, the testimony of mankind against it, though their practice be on its side. Hence comes the veil and covering of hypocrisy. Most part of sins are the works of darkness, because they shun the light. But, when once a sinner has come to a certain degree, he throws off every mask or covering, and sins in the face of the sun. He no more seeks darkness for his evil deeds, but walks as "destructi-" on that wasteth at noon-day." The observing eyes, and censuring tongues of men, are, now, no bar in his way; since the strength of inclination and habit is such, that he must indulge himself, he takes courage, and refuses to be restrained.

The prophet Jeremiah mentions it as an evidence of a high degree of degeneracy in the children of Israel, that many of them had lost all sense of shame, Jeremiah vi. 15. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomi-" nation? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could " they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that " fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, " saith the Lord." And, without all question, it is an evidence of an uncommon height of impiety, when even natural shame is gone; and whoever are in that condition, have lost a very powerful fence to virtue. So long as shame remains, it is a great draw-back upon them in their licentious practices; but, when it is no more, they are without curb or restraint, they *draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin, as it were, with a cart-rope.* And that men are naturally carried to this bold and shameless impiety, is evident from the very nature of the thing. Repeated acts of sin, which must be known, offend natural modesty so frequently, and accustom a man so much to shame, that he loses the sense of it in time altogether. Of this we have but too many examples.

(6.) Another ſtage in the ſinner's progreſs, is, to harden himſelf ſo far, as to ſin without remorſe of conſcience. The conſcience of a ſinner, for a long time, bears its teſtimony againſt him, and every outward indulgence coſts him ſome inward uneaſineſs; but, after he hath given himſelf over to abandoned wickedneſs, it frequently ceaſes its reproof. This victory he may obtain two different ways. 1. The eaſieſt and ſpeedieſt way is by hearkening to looſe principles. Theſe, at once, ſet the mind at eaſe, and blunt the reproofs of conſcience. But of this I have ſpoken on a former head. 2. The other way is practical. The frequent repetition of atrocious crimes ſtupifies the conſcience. They, as it were, weary it out, and drive it to deſpair. It is much the ſame with the monitor in our own breaſt, and any friend who has a concern for another; if he finds that inſtruction, admonition, reproach, are all in vain, he, at laſt, looſens the reins, and ſuffers him to take his courſe. Now, what muſt be the condition of a man, who has out-ſinned even his conſcience itſelf? he muſt ſurely be kept within no bounds, but triumph in his miſerable conqueſt. The apoſtle Paul tells us, 1 Tim. iv. 2. of ſome who are guilty of "ſpeaking lies in hypo-"criſy, having their conſcience ſeared with a hot iron." And thus deſcribes the condition of ſome ſinners, Eph. iv. 19. "Who being paſt feeling, have given themſelves "over unto laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with "greedineſs." Perhaps, it may be thought ſome degree of comfort to a ſinner to have overcome his conſcience, ſo that he is no more harraſſed with its reproofs. But conſider, I pray you, that all that he hereby gains, is only to be a little farther out of the way of recovery, a little nearer to deſtruction. What avails it, that he has rendered himſelf inſenſible of his danger? This will neither ſcreen him from it, nor make it lighter when it falls. There is ſomething, on the contrary, extremely terrible in the condition of that man who is inſenſible of the judgment awaiting him, and ſtill going on, till he lift up his eyes in torments that ſhall never have an end. But, before this, he has frequently ſome further ſteps to go. Having finiſhed his character, he proceeds to finiſh his work; and, therefore, in the

(7.) Place, Improved ſinners often come to boaſt and glory of their wickedneſs. It is ſomething to be above ſhame; but it is more ſtill to glory in wickedneſs, and eſteem it honorable. Hear what the apoſtle Paul ſays of ſuch, Phil. iii. 18, 19. "For many walk, of whom I have "told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that "they are the enemies of the croſs of Chriſt, whoſe end is "deſtruction, whoſe God is their belly, and whoſe glory is "in their ſhame, who mind earthly things." How many are there who have ſtudied to excel each other in the glorious art of debauchery and riot, and then proclaim their own praiſes upon the ſubject! How dreadful and how pernicious a character! for it is never ſeparated from its counterpart, deſpiſing and reproaching true religion, and a ſtedfaſt adherence to its laws. It gives me great concern to ſay, that there is ſo much pains taken amongſt us, to give countenance to profanity; ſo that it requires no ſmall meaſure of courage and reſolution not to be aſhamed of our Maſter's croſs. To what height of wickedneſs are thoſe arrived, who have thus inverted the natural order of things, have maſtered their own judgment, and turned their reaſon upſide down. Glorious ambition indeed! to have made ſuch a progreſs downward toward the brute creation, both as to their bodily appetites and the ſentiments of their minds. There remaineth but one ſtep more for them to take, viz.

(8.) Not to be content with being wicked themſelves, but to uſe all their art and influence to make others ſo too. This is to be zealous in ſinning, and induſtriouſly to promote the intereſt of the infernal cauſe. How often do we find thoſe who have no fear of God before their own eyes, uſe their utmoſt endeavors to extinguiſh it in others, to laugh down the qualms of their conſciences, and break any reluctance they may ſeem to have at running to the ſame exceſs of riot with themſelves? Some are ſo eminent this way that they reſemble the Phariſees who "compaſſed ſea "and land to make one proſelyte," and when they had made him, they made him "two-fold more the child of hell than "themſelves." So will zealots in vice, compaſs ſea and land to make a proſelyte to the devil. It is hard to tell

to what we ſhould attribute this extraordinary conduct. Is it that they are really perſuaded they have made a wiſe choice, and out of their great generoſity and affection to their brethren are willing to make them partners of their joy? This I am afraid will hardly be believed by any reaſonable man. It is more probable, that as they reſemble in many other reſpects their father the devil, ſo they reſemble him alſo in malice, "going about like roaring lions, "ſeeking whom they may devour." They already begin to feel their miſery by ſin, and deſire to bring as many as poſſible into the ſame condition, as a wretched (and indeed miſtaken) ſource of conſolation in their future wo.

And now to cloſe the ſcene, thoſe who have thus far hardened themſelves ſhall be given up of God to judicial blindneſs of mind, and hardneſs of heart. When this ſentence takes place, they are incapable of mercy, and marked out as veſſels of wrath, fitted to deſtruction. That God ſometimes, in his righteous judgment, lays the ſinner under this awful ſentence, is evident from the following paſſages of ſcripture, Iſa. vi. 10. "Make the heart of this "people fat, and make their ears heavy, and ſhut their "eyes: leſt they ſee with their eyes, and hear with their "ears, and underſtand with their heart, and convert, and "be healed. John xii. 39, 40. "Therefore they could "not believe, becauſe that Eſaias ſaid again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they ſhould "not ſee with their eyes, nor underſtand with their heart, "and be converted, and I ſhould heal them." Rom. i. 28. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their "knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, "to do thoſe things which are not convenient." 2 Theſſ. ii. 11, 12. "And for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them "ſtrong deluſions, that they ſhall believe a lie; that they "all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but "had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs." This is always a conſequence of their former obſtinacy. As they deſpiſe and trample upon his mercy, he gives them over to themſelves and the maſters they have choſen; he finiſhes the day of his patience and long-ſuffering, and devotes them to the judgment they deſerve.

And now, my brethren, view (and view it with terror!) the dreadful conſequence of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and by what fatal ſteps it leads on to that hardneſs of heart, which is a ſure prelude of eternal miſery. Who that ventures upon the practice of ſin, ever intends to go ſo far? They mean only to take a ſhort trial of the pleaſures of vice; but it gains upon them inſenſibly, and fixes its hold ſtill faſter and faſter, till they are its abſolute ſlaves. I ſhall conclude this illuſtration of the deceitfulneſs of ſin with obſerving, that there is an exact correſpondence between the progreſs of a ſaint in holineſs and meetneſs for heaven, and the progreſs of a wicked man in ſin, and his growing fitneſs and preparation for hell. A new convert finds it hard at firſt to ſeparate himſelf from his ſins, and confine himſelf within the bounds of duty; he has ſome relenting thought towards his luſts, as old companions from which he is to part forever. Juſt ſo a young and unexperienced ſinner finds ſome reluctance at ſin, ſome uneaſineſs from the challenges of conſcience, and painful forebodings of his unknown future fate.——A good man after walking ſome time in the paths of virtue, finds the way become ſmoother and eaſier, and ſerves God with greater conſtancy, and with greater pleaſure. Juſt ſo the ſinner finds it more eaſy, through time, to violate his conſcience, does it more frequently, and with leſs remorſe.—A good man ſoon aſſociates himſelf with the excellent ones of the earth, he is inſtructed by their converſation, emboldened by their example, and aſſiſted by their prayers. Juſt ſo the ſinner ſoon finds, or is found out by thoſe who are like him in inclination; they join in confederacy, adopt each others principles, and follow each others practice.——A good man in time is thoroughly confirmed, becomes poſſeſt of a prevailing love to God and holineſs; ſo that it is his very nature, his delight, as well as duty. Juſt ſo the ſinner, in proceſs of time, is governed by his luſts: they acquire that authority over him that they do not ſolicit but demand indulgence.——A good man is fortified in his choice, and deſpiſes the ſmiles and frowns of a corrupt world. Juſt ſo the ſinner lays aſide ſhame, and ſays, nay but I will do that which

hath proceeded out of my mouth.——A good man is filled with concern for the intereſt of religion. Juſt ſo the ſinner eſpouſes the cauſe of profanity, will plead it in his converſation, and ſtrengthen it with his ſubſtance.—In fine, a good man is at laſt raiſed above the world, his heart is in heaven, and he longs to be carried there. Juſt ſo the ſinner fills up the meaſure of his iniquity; the infernal paſſions take poſſeſſion of the whole man, he wearies of the earth for the few good men that are in it, and is fully prepared for the language of blaſphemy and deſpair.

II. I proceed now to the ſecond general head, which was to conſider the duty which is founded by the apoſtle on the deceitfulneſs of ſin, viz. mutual exhortation, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called, to-day.* This I ſhall do by ſome reflections on the three following particulars. 1ſt, The perſons who are obliged to exhort others. 2dly, The ſeaſon in which this duty is to be performed. And, 3dly, The manner in which it is to be performed, if we hope to do it with ſucceſs.

1. As to the perſons who are obliged to exhort others. It ſeems in this paſſage to be laid upon Chriſtians in general, without any exception, *exhort one another*; and there is little doubt, that it may and ought to be underſtood in the greateſt latitude. This is perfectly conſonant to the ſpirit of true religion, to our relation one to another, and to the conſtant language both of the Old and New Teſtament. The two great branches of practical religion, the heads of the two tables of the moral law, are love to God and love to man; and as our love to man ought to take its riſe from our love to God, ſo there can be no expreſſion of it more natural, or more neceſſary, than an endeavor to warn them of the deceitful nature and dangerous conſequences of ſin. This is a duty which is founded with the higheſt propriety on the deceitfulneſs of ſin. For as it deludes the ſinner himſelf often in an inſenſible manner, others may be ſuppoſed to obſerve his condition, and to ſee the impoſition more clearly, and are therefore obliged, by the dictates both of humanity and piety, to awaken him as it were from his lethargy, and admoniſh him of

his danger. Oh, my brethren! conſider how clear and unqueſtionable this duty appears in common matters. Suppoſe any man were to obſerve an apartment on fire, and know of ſeveral perſons ſleeping over it, or near it, in ſecurity, when a few moments delay would wrap them in the flames, what a monſter of injuſtice and barbarity would he be reckoned, if he did not give them immediate notice, that they might flee from the danger. Is the danger of ſin leſs real? Is it leſs terrible? Juſt the contrary. The loſs of ſubſtance, or the loſs of life, by fire in our dwellings, is not once to be compared with having ſoul and body forever tormented in the fire of hell.

Agreeably to this, we find frequent mention of this duty both in the Old and New Teſtament. It is a precept in the Levitical law, Lev. xix. 17. "Thou ſhalt "not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou ſhalt in any "wiſe rebuke thy neighbor, and not ſuffer ſin upon him." Prov. ix. 8. "—Rebuke a wiſe man, and he will love "thee." Phil. ii. 4. "Look not every man on his own "things, but every man alſo on the things of others." Heb. x. 24. "And let us conſider one another to provoke "unto love, and to good works."

There is no doubt, at the ſame time, that this duty, however general, lies with peculiar and heavier obligations on ſome than on others, and varies a little according to the different relations we ſtand in to one another. You will eaſily be ſenſible how much it is the duty of thoſe who have the miniſtry of reconciliation committed to them, who are entruſted with the charge of precious ſouls, to be urgent and earneſt in their exhortations, to all without exception; to be at all proper pains to fit themſelves for awakening the attention, enlightening the underſtanding, and convincing the conſciences of their hearers. It is their duty to do what in them lies, to trace the ſubtil workings and windings of the human heart, and to know the depths of Satan, as the ſcripture expreſſes it, to declare the whole counſel of God, and keep back nothing that is profitable for their hearers. It is not to be denied that you ought to hear them with patience and attention; that they have a right to ſpeak with freedom and

boldneſs to perſons of every rank and character; and that there ought to be a particular fire and edge in their exhortations, ſince they watch for your ſouls as thoſe who muſt give an account unto God.

There is alſo a particular obligation upon ſuperiors of all ſorts, whether in office, as magiſtrates; in ſtation, as perſons of wealth and opulence; in years, as thoſe whom time and experience ſhould have enriched with ſolid wiſdom; in relation, as parents and maſters of families, to be frequent in exhorting others, and warning them of the deceitfulneſs of ſin. It is laid upon them, and expected of them, that they ſhould not live to themſelves, that they ſhould not ſatisfy themſelves with exacting and looking for the reſpect and deference which is their due; but that they ought to exert themſelves, in giving uſeful inſtruction or ſalutary admonition to all who are within their ſphere. Is ſin ſo deceitful? Are the unwary and ignorant ſo eaſily miſled, and ſo hardly recovered? Then ſurely thoſe who ought to excel others in knowledge, ſhould be careful to impart it for the benefit of the weak. Undoubtedly, my brethren, it is not only a Chriſtian, but a noble and amiable character, for thoſe who are exalted above others, to be full of compaſſion to their inferiors, and in their whole converſation breathing a deſire after their ſpiritual good.

But it is alſo plainly a part of Chriſtian friendſhip, even for equals to exhort one another, and kindly to communicate their mutual experience in the ſpiritual life. "The "lips of the righteous (we are told by Solomon) feed ma-"ny." O how rare and difficult a duty! But wherefore ſhould it be either difficult or rare? The Love of God leads to it. The ſtate of your brethren requires it. And ſurely it is neither unpleaſant nor hurtful to him that performs it. I am ſenſible where the difficulty lies. We ſuppoſe there are few who will hear it with patience, or receive it with profit. Alas! my brethren, it is too true, we hear, on all hands, complaints, that people will not take advice; that they are but offended, inſtead of being reformed. Perhaps, indeed, this is as much owing to the manner of giving, as to the backwardneſs of receiving

counsel. However, we shall allow the objection; and, since the duty is mutual, I hope it will not be reckoned wandering from the subject, if I beseech you to submit to one anothers exhortation. We all stand in need of it; we may all be the better for it. What though it be administered imprudently or harshly for the manner; nay, though it may flow from envy, pride, or malice, as the principle; you will lose nothing by hearkening to the counsel. I do not remember any thing recorded more truly glorious for a monarch, than what we are told of Philip of Macedon, that he heard reproofs not only with patience, but with pleasure: and I am sure, there is nothing more like a Christian, than to profit, not only by the admonitions of friends, but by the reproaches of enemies. If they are just, reform what is amiss; if they are probable, abstain from the appearance of evil: if they are neither the one nor the other, submit to them with patience, as a part of the will of God.

2. I come now to consider the season in which the duty of mutual exhortation is to be performed, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called, to-day.* By which we are to understand, that it is to be done frequently, and without delay. This, my brethren, will perfectly accommodate the subject of this discourse to our present situation, when entering on another year. We have many admonitions of the quick passage of time; and all these serve to enforce the exhortation of the wise man, Eccles. ix. 10. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do "it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, "nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither "thou goest." If any hearer has received a conviction of the deceitfulness of sin, or the duty of mutual exhortation, he ought seriously to consider, that the present time only is his; that he knoweth not what a day or a night may bring forth; and that delaying or postponing what he may do at present, is at the possible or probable hazard of its being left undone for ever. I beseech you, my brethren, to make this use of the commencement of another year. There is no difference, in one sense, between one day and another, as much of life is spent, and

as much of our dying frame is wasted in one day as in another; but our computation and reckoning of revolving years, by the principal seasons, only helps us to mark the constant, though silent passage of time, which, like a flowing river, is bearing us all down into the ocean of eternity. Has any of us then a relation, friend, or child, to whose eternal interest he desires, or sees it to be his duty to contribute? let him be speedy and diligent, whether by instruction, admonition, example, or even prayer: you know not how short a time the opportunity may last. By and by all these relations shall be dissolved. How many who were with us last year, are now sleeping in the dust; their state irrevocably fixed for eternity, either entered into rest, and happy in their Redeemer's presence, or reserved in chains of darkness, and looking forward, with despair and terror, to the general judgment. No warning of the deceitfulness of sin there; they know it, and feel it, in inward reproach, and everlasting self-condemnation. No preaching of the gospel there; no hope of recovery, or place for repentance there: so that we may justly address every hearer of the gospel, in the words of the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. "We then, as "workers together with him, beseech you also, that you "receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith, I have "heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salva-"tion have I succored thee: behold, now is the accept-"ed time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

I shall only add, that the deceitfulness of sin, and the precariousness of time, are considerations which serve greatly to strengthen one another. As time wastes, the sinner hardens; not only is the season passing away, but the work is becoming still more difficult, and, at last, as I have shown before, in the course of nature, and by the appointment of God, totally impossible. It is the danger of a hardened state, that the Apostle urges; particularly in this passage, as the argument to diligence, *But exhort one another daily, while it is called, to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* And, indeed, elsewhere, we are cautioned against delay, for the same reason. Thus, in Psal. xcv. 7, 8. which is cited a few verses after the

text, "—To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not "your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of "temptation in the wilderneſs."

3. Let us conſider the manner in which this exhortation muſt be given, if we hope to do it with ſucceſs. And, here, I muſt acknowledge, there is ſo great a variety of caſes, that it would be extremely difficult, or almoſt impoſſible, diſtinctly, to enumerate them all, and give the different directions that are ſuited to each; there muſt be a great difference in the manner, according to the end propoſed. Superiors of all ſorts, magiſtrates, miniſters, and heads of families, may, and ought to reprove, both with authority and ſeverity, becauſe the end is not ſingly the reformation of an individual, but the preſervation of others, and the general good: nay, even private Chriſtians may often be called to reprove, in much the ſame manner as a public teſtimony of their abhorrence of ſin: they may have it, chiefly, in view, to ſave or edify the by-ſtanders, by refuting the calumnies of an enemy, bearing down triumphant wickedneſs, or diſgracing an open factor for the devil.

But as I reckon the paſſage of ſcripture, which is the ſubject of my diſcourſe, has an eye, chiefly, to brotherly admonition, for the benefit of the perſon concerned, I ſhall juſt mention ſome of the moſt important directions for doing it with ſucceſs. Theſe ſhall be both negative and poſitive.

1ſt, You ought not to reprove at an uncertainty, upon bare rumor and ſuſpicion. This is what many people have done, and thereby have, in a great meaſure, loſt all the pains they have beſtowed. Where men are reproved in the wrong place, or for what they either are not guilty of, or are much leſs guilty than is ſuppoſed, it often puts them upon ſelf-juſtification, and hardens them againſt all reproof for the time to come.

2dly, It ought not to be done when the offending perſon is in an ill temper to receive it. Though no time ought to be loſt in doing what good we can to our neighbor, eſpecially to the precious ſoul; yet it is worſe than loſing time to attempt it, when he is in a diſpoſition to re-

ject it: for example, it is usually improper presently after the sin is committed, because then the heat is not over, nor the uproar of the passions and affections appeased. Many a domestic reproof is thrown away in this manner. Perhaps, a husband comes home disordered in liquor, and his wife meets him with a surly countenance, and reproachful language; the offence is too recently taken by her to speak with meekness, and the provocation too recently given by him to hear with patience: hence dissensions and quarrels arise; and, perhaps, he is hardened in his sin, by thinking he hath greater cause to be displeased with his wife for the frowardness of her temper, than she has to be displeased with him for his intemperance. On the other hand, it is not improbable, that, by waiting till the return of calmness and reflection, the sin may be set in such a light, as to carry conviction to the conscience, and, by the blessing of God, prove the means of reformation. Many are the admirable remarks of Solomon on this and the like subjects; particularly, Prov. xv. 23. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!"

3dly, We are not to reprove those whom we have reason to believe to be such desperate wretches, that they would be but the more exasperated, and sin in the more daring manner, on account of the reproof. To these it would be no act of love and charity, as it would provoke them to dishonor God still more highly, and so heap still heavier loads of wrath and vengeance on their own heads. It is a saying of Augustine, one of the fathers: 'If we, therefore abstain from admonishing wicked men, 'because the season does not suffer it, or, we fear, they 'may become worse by it, that seems to be the counsel of 'charity.' And, alas! how many are there, who, when they are reproved for their sins, though very justly, are presently kindled into a rage, fall a blaspheming and railing at piety, and all that profess it, and seem more confirmed than ever in their hatred and opposition to it. Therefore we are expressly warned of the danger of this by Solomon, Prov. ix. 7. "He that reproveth a scorner, "getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himself a blot." And, to the same

purpoſe, our bleſſed Saviour, Matth. vii. 6. "Give not "that which is holy unto the dogs, neither caſt ye your "pearls before ſwine, leſt they trample them under their "feet, and turn again and rend you." On the other hand, poſitively, when reproof or exhortation are adminiſtered,

1ſt, It ſhould be made appear, as much as poſſible, to flow from love and affection as its principle. It is plain that this ought to be its principle, in order to its being a a duty acceptable to God; and there will be little hope of its ſucceſs with men, unleſs this appear to their conviction. It would, indeed, be greater perfection to profit by the malicious invectives of enemies; but every body will allow, that is not ordinarily to be expected; for this reaſon, all oſtentation and vain glory is carefully to be avoided, and every thing that may look like only affecting ſuperiority; for the ſame reaſon, it ſhould, in all ordinary caſes, be done in as ſecret a manner as circumſtances will permit it. The caſe of public offences, to be ſure, muſt be excepted; concerning which we are told, "Them "that ſin, rebuke before all, that others alſo may fear." But, in other caſes, not only of private injury, but of private ſins, the rule of our Saviour is to be obſerved, Matth. xviii. 15. "—If thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go "and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if "he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother." I cannot ſay all that might be ſaid on this ſubject; but nothing can be of greater importance, than, if poſſible, to ſhow that it flows from love: for, where the offender is truly convinced of this, even though he ſhould not be reformed, it is very ſeldom that he is diſpleaſed. Therefore,

2dly, As it ought to flow from love as the principle, ſo it ought to be conducted with meekneſs in the ſame manner. No railing or reviling expreſſions, which will look like the wounds of an enemy, to deſtroy, and not the balm of a phyſician, to cure. Therefore the Apoſtle gives us advice, in the following terms, Gal. vi. 1. "Brethren, if a "man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual, re-"ſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs: conſidering "thyſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted." This laſt expreſſion

gives an inimitable beauty to the apoſtolic counſel. Our own ſins ſhould fill us with compaſſion as much as reſentment againſt ſinners, and ſhould make us take the ſame gentle methods with others that we would wiſh to be taken with ourſelves, if we were in their condition. We are of the ſame nature, liable to the ſame temptations, and, if left of God, may eaſily fall into the ſame miſcarriages. Beſides, as it is moſt ſuitable to our ſtate and character, ſo it is moſt likely to have a proper effect. Meek and gentle admonitions will penetrate the heart, when rough and clamorous reproofs will be rejected and deſpiſed. Thus Solomon ſays, Prov. xxv. 15. "By long forbearing is a "prince perſuaded, and a ſoft tongue breaketh the bone." And, Chap. xv. 1. "A ſoft anſwer turneth away wrath, "but grievous words ſtir up anger."

3dly, Reproof ſhould be given with ſome degree of zeal as well as meekneſs; we ſhould avoid the extreme of remiſſneſs as well as ſeverity. A ſlight careleſs reproof is often worſe than none; for it is ready to make the offender think lightly of his own offence. There muſt, therefore, be ſuch evident weight and concern of ſpirit, as may ſerve to evidence as well his danger as your own love. For this reaſon, I beg leave to obſerve, that ſpeaking in a way of jeſt, and merriment, on ſins of an atrocious nature is deeply criminal, and highly pernicious. Solomon tells us, "Fools make a mock at ſin." Though a turn to raillery and pleaſantneſs of temper is reckoned a very harmleſs as well as agreeable diſpoſition; yet great care ought to be taken of the ſubjects on which it is exerciſed. It is only ſmaller weakneſſes that ought to be treated in this manner. Sins againſt God ſhould be treated with a gravity and ſerioufneſs from the importance of their nature and effects. I ſhall give an inſtance of this. Swearing, and taking the name of God in vain, is ſometimes ridiculed, inſtead of being reproved. This ſeldom has a good effect. The crime is of ſo atrocious a nature, and ſo direct an aſſault upon the majeſty of God, that it ought not to be treated lightly, as only a ſmall indecorum, or breach of good manners. It ought, indeed, to be deſpiſed

for its folly; but, at the same time it ought to be deeply abhorred for its guilt.

4thly, In the last place. In admonishing one another for particular sins, we should still keep in view the source of all sin, a polluted nature; and the great danger of the sinner, as in a sinful state. Though particular miscarriages may give the occasion, it is of small moment to convince them of the folly of such or such a practice, unless you point out to them the necessity of repentance, in general, upon evangelical principles. I have rarely seen that any arguments were sufficient to reform a sinner of any particular fault he was once addicted to, but those drawn from eternity, and the awful effects of the displeasure of a holy God. Present inconveniencies, however great, soon lose their effect, and are quite unequal to combat a vitious inclination, or wrestle with the power of habit. But, though it were otherwise, what a small matter is it to cure a man of being a drunkard, or a swearer, or a whoremonger, if still you leave him a slave to sin, upon the whole, a servant of the devil, and an heir of hell? It is plainly with a view to the final consequences of sin, that the Apostle recommends mutual exhortation in this passage, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called, to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* Would you, therefore, admonish any person to his real profit? make use of particulars, to convince him of the evil of all sin, as such, and its power and influence over him by nature. When you reprove him for any fault he has committed, shew him the deceitfulness of sin, and where, if he do not speedily stop, he will be landed at last. Let his eternal state be the motive that urges you to the duty, and let the same great consideration be made use of to carry home the instruction with power and efficacy upon his heart.

5thly, In the last place. Let those who would acquit themselves of this duty, in a proper manner, be particularly watchful and circumspect in their own conduct. It is evident, that nothing can be more unsuitable, than for those, who take upon them to admonish others, to be grossly and visibly blameable themselves. It is, indeed,

ſo intolerable, that nobody can bear their inſtructions with patience. You know, from daily experience, that recrimination is the firſt thing to which thoſe who are reprehended betake themſelves. The moment they are challenged, the reply is ready, Why, you yourſelf, do ſo and ſo, or, perhaps, worſe. So prone are they to this, that many times they will upbraid men with innocent or lawful things, as if they were faults, to cover their own guilty practice. Now, if this is the caſe, how much more hurtful muſt it be for thoſe, who reprove others, to be really liable to juſt accuſation themſelves, and, perhaps upon the ſame ſubject? Therefore our Saviour ſays, with the greateſt ſtrength and propriety, Luke vi. 41, 42. "And why beholdeſt thou the mote that is in thy brother's "eye, but perceiveſt not the beam that is in thine own "eye? Either, how canſt thou ſay to thy brother, Bro- "ther, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when "thou, thyſelf, beholdeſt not the beam that is in thine own "eye? Thou hypocrite, caſt out firſt the beam out of "thine own eye, and then ſhalt thou ſee clearly to pull "out the mote that is in thy brother's eye?" Perhaps, my brethren, ſome of you are ſaying within yourſelves: Alas! you have now deſtroyed the whole effect of what has been urged, at ſo great length, on the duty of mutual exhortation; for where is the man that is without ſin, to reprove his neighbor? My brethren, no doubt we have all ſuch failings as ought to make us do it with meekneſs and ſelf-denial; yet ſurely we both may and ought to walk ſo circumſpectly, as not to be juſtly liable to heavy accuſations. Though there is no holding of intemperate tongues, yet, ſurely, there is ſuch a thing as a converſation becoming the goſpel, which will entitle the ſervant of Chriſt to appear with ſome meaſure of courage in his maſter's cauſe; nay, and ſuch an habitual love of mankind, as may ſometimes open their ears to his ſalutary counſel. And, believe it, thoſe who begin to make conſcience of their duty to their neighbor, either in a family, or a wider ſphere, will find its powerful and happy influence as a reſtraint upon their own conduct. They will be naturally led to double their diligence, leſt their example ſhould un-

happily, fruſtrate the effect of their reproofs.——One particular more I muſt add, that the next thing to being always in the right, is to be humble, and ready to confeſs when you have been in the wrong. This alſo is a ſcripture precept, James v. 16, "Confeſs your faults one to "another, and pray one for another, that ye may be "healed." I am perſuaded that few things would add greater weight to any perſon's admonitions, than his being willing to confeſs, and ready to amend, any thing that was pointed out to him as blameable in his own conduct.

I come now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical application of what has been ſaid. And,

1. From what has been ſaid, you may ſee the great corruption and depravity of our nature. I look upon it as of great moment to have a deep and growing conviction of this truth. It is the language of ſcripture, it is the language of experience, and it is the parent of humility. I obſerved, in the beginning of my diſcourſe on this ſubject, and it appears from every thing that has been ſaid upon it, that the deceitfulneſs of ſin is but another expreſſion for the treachery of the human heart. In vain would the objects of ſin appear before us; in vain would Satan and his emiſſaries preſent their ſolicitations, if our own inclination did not plead powerfully in their favor. To be deeply convinced of this, will lead to the exerciſe of penitence, and to ſelf-denial, which is the beſt mean of our ſupport and preſervation. If the deceitfulneſs of ſin lies chiefly in ourſelves, that man will guard againſt it in the moſt effectual manner, who has learned to fear himſelf as his own greateſt enemy.

2. From what has been ſaid, let us be led to ſtrictneſs and frequency in ſelf-examination. If ſin is ſo deceitful, it may eaſily lurk unobſerved. Self-knowledge is a ſtudy of as great difficulty as importance. You have heard what artful diſguiſes ſin puts on, and how dreadfully ſome have been led aſtray. The very beſt duties may be polluted by ſinful motives, and the very worſt things may be done by an erring conſcience, of which we may juſtly ſay, with our Saviour, Matth. vi. 23. "—If there-

" fore the light that is in thee be darkneſs, how great is " that darkneſs !" The old heathen precept, " Know " thyſelf," was reckoned ſo excellent a ſaying, that they ſuppoſed it to be a revelation from Heaven. And, in the holy Scriptures, we have many exhortations to ſelf-examination. I ſhall only mention that of the apoſtle Paul, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. " Examine yourſelves, whether ye be in " the faith; prove your own ſelves: know ye not your " own ſelves, how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you, except ye " be reprobates ?" Nay, after all our pains to examine ourſelves, there ought to remain ſuch a ſuſpicion of our own treachery, as ſhould make us intreat, humbly and earneſtly, the more impartial trial of a heart-ſearching God, Pſal. xix. 12. " Who can underſtand his errors ? " Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults." Pſal. cxxxix. 23, 24. " Search me, O God ! and know my heart: try me, " and know my thoughts: and ſee if there be any wicked " way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting."

3. From what hath been ſaid, let me beſeech all, but eſpecially young perſons, to beware of the beginnings of ſin. It may be ſaid of ſin, in general, as Solomon ſays of ſtrife, " the beginning of it is like the letting out of wa- " ter." Beware of all that diſcourſe which tends to give you ſlight thoughts of any ſin. Sometimes men conſider ſins as ſmall ſins, and therefore tolerable. Many parents have thought it wrong to check their children for the follies and levities of youth, and have found, to their melancholy experience, that when follies had been ſuffered to ripen into crimes, they had taken too deep hold to be rooted up. Many make light of ſin by compariſon. How common is the pretence of the drunkards: We are harming nobody; we are not ſpeaking ill of our neighbors; we are not oppreſſing the poor. In the mean time, they are ſoon led to curſing and blaſphemy; and, perhaps, by their riotous living, they are unable to pay their juſt debts, rob the induſtrious poor of their right, and, for the indulgence of a beaſtly appetite, bring their own offſpring to beggary and ruin. Such is the behavior of many of your harmleſs people; men of ſocial friendly diſpoſitions, that, if you believe them, would not wrong their neighbor of a

farthing to their knowledge; and yet it would be happy for any man to fall into the hands of highway robbers, rather than into their ſociety. How ſhort-ſighted men are! they not only forget to look forward to the other world, but look not even to any diſtance in this. From time to time we are made fools by ſin, which never aſk more of us than the preſent compliance; yet, if this is granted, never leaves us till our ſtate is irrecoverable. What reaſon have all to be afraid of that deplorable hardneſs of heart which is the conſequence of the continued indulgence of ſin. Let us never conſider any ſin by itſelf, but together with that ugly train which it draws behind it; and, then, though our falſe hearts might plead for the indulgence of a ſingle luſt, they may not be ſo willing to ſubmit to that deluge of vice which follows faſt at its heels.

4. In the laſt place, I ſhall cloſe the ſubject, by addreſſing an exhortation to thoſe of my hearers, who have been long and hardened ſinners; who have many habits of vice cleaving to them; who have hitherto deſpiſed the goſpel, and even ſat in the ſeat of the ſcornful. No doubt, you have heard, in vain, and, perhaps, with contempt, many exhortations of this kind before; and therefore, there is, humanly ſpeaking, but little hope, that any thing I can ſay will have the effect. However, as our bleſſed and gracious Maſter has commanded his goſpel to be preached to every creature, this Prince of the kings of the earth is able, by his Spirit accompanying the word, to lay the proudeſt and the boldeſt of his enemies proſtrate at his feet; let me beſeech you, in his name, to hear, that your ſouls may live. Why will you longer continue at enmity with him, while he his offering you mercy? nay, he is treating you with mercy in every inſtance of his kind providence, in the renewed meſſages of his bleſſed word, and in his dying agonies on the accurſed tree! Have you been long wedded to ſin? he is able to ſet you free; he came to deſtroy the works of the devil, and is able to knock off the ſtrongeſt fetters, and reſtore liberty to the moſt ſorrowful captive. "We, then, as workers together with him, beſeech you "alſo, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

Remember, on the other hand, I beſeech you, the dreadful vengeance that awaits the deſpiſers of the goſpel. If you ſtill refuſe the gracious offer; if you will not ſuffer his mercy to be glorified in your recovery, his holineſs, power, and juſtice, ſhall be illuſtrated in your perdition. Time is haſtening away; judgment is haſtening on; no refuſing to appear at that bar; no deceiving or biaſſing that judge; no room to eſcape; no ſource of conſolation under that ſentence. How inſupportable the reflection on opportunity irrecoverably loſt! And how terrible the ſanction which follows upon the offer of mercy! You may read it, Prov. i. 24,——31. "Becauſe I have called, and "ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man "regarded: but ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, "and would none of my reproof: I alſo will laugh at your "calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When "your fear cometh as deſolation. and your deſtruction "cometh as a whirlwind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh com-"eth upon you. Then ſhall they call upon me, but I "will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they "ſhall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and "did not chuſe the fear of the Lord. They would none "of my counſel; they deſpiſed all my reproof: there-"fore ſhall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and "be filled with their own devices."

I only add, if any impreſſion is made on your minds, of the importance of eternity, ſuffer it to abide there. Let it have an immediate effect. Of all the deceits of ſin or Satan, none more fatal than that of putting off convictions to a more convenient ſeaſon. I conclude, therefore, with the words of Solomon, Eccleſ. ix. 10. "Whatſoever thy "hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is "no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom, in "the grave whither thou goeſt." Amen.

THE BELIEVER GOING TO GOD AS HIS EXCEEDING JOY.

A SERMON.

Pſalm xliii. 4.

Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.

IT is of great moment to attend to the proper mixture of reverence and love which ought to poſſeſs our hearts in the worſhip of the living God. If they ariſe from proper principles, they will not deſtroy or weaken, but ſtrengthen one another. A believer can never lye too low in the duſt before the moſt holy God; he can never be too ſenſible either of his diſtance as a creature, or his guilt and unworthineſs as a ſinner: but, at the ſame time, he can never be too deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of divine love, or have too ſtrong and ardent deſires after communion and fellowſhip with God. The truth is, the lower we are in our own ſight, it doth but the more illuſtrate and magnify all the grace that is ſhewn to us in the goſpel: and the more joyfully we contemplate the fulneſs of our portion in an infinite God, it will but the more bring back this reflection, and conſtrain us to confeſs, that we are leſs than the leaſt of all his mercies.

In ſeveral paſſages of the Pſalms of David, we have very warm and fervent expreſſions of the delight which the man after God's own heart had in the worſhip of his ſanctuary. There are few of theſe more beautiful and forcible than the paſſage of which my text is a part, "O ſend

" out thy light and thy truth ; let them lead me ; let them " bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. " *Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my ex-* " *ceeding joy.*" That which ſeems to have brought the Pſalmiſt to this ſtriking and beautiful thought, was, his being under the preſſure of heavy affliction ; and, particularly, in a ſtate of diſtance and baniſhment from the temple ſervice. This led him to flee for refuge to God, his almighty friend and unchangeable portion. Did the Pſalmiſt then go to God as his conſolation in diſtreſs ? What reaſon is there for every Chriſtian to go to him as his Father and his God, not only for ſupport under the various trials of this mortal ſtate, but for happineſs and peace after he hath ſeen and felt the inherent vanity of every created enjoyment ?

All I ſhall further add upon the words is, that what David is here praying for, is to be brought to the temple of God, to have acceſs to his courts, and communion with him there. This he plainly looks upon as a ſource of exceeding joy ; and, ſurely, to thoſe who are duly diſpoſed for it, there is not, there cannot be, in this world, a more delightful employment than the joint celebration of our Creator and Redeemer's praiſe ; than the united voice of his ſervants in his temple. It is the neareſt approach we can make to the employment of heaven, and the moſt ſenſible foretaſte we can have of its happineſs in this foreign land.

But, my brethren, I muſt limit the ſubject to what is the particular and diſtinguiſhing employment of this day, —the holy ordinance of the Lord's ſupper, commemorating our Redeemer's dying love. This was called by the ancients the *Eucharist*, or *Sacrifice of Praise*. And, indeed, no diſpoſition is more proper or neceſſary, in attending upon it, than a joyful and thankful frame of ſpirit. This will be like a precious perfume, which will fill the houſe with its fragrance, and will greatly ſtrengthen every other gracious diſpoſition ; and, therefore, my intention is, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace,

I. To ſhew you what matter of joy and ſatisfaction there is to every ſincere Chriſtian, in what is repreſented to our view in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper; or, for what reaſons we ought, in this ſolemn ſervice in a particular manner, *to go to God as our exceeding joy.*

Having done ſo, I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject for your inſtruction and direction.

In the firſt place, then, I am to ſhew you what matter of joy and ſatisfaction there is to every ſincere Chriſtian, in what is repreſented to our view in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper; or for what reaſons we ought, in this ſolemn ſervice, in a particular manner, *to go to God as our exceeding joy.* I am deeply ſenſible, my brethren, that I have entered on a taſk to which I am very unequal, to raiſe your minds to that ſublime temper, of joy in God, and to diſcloſe that fountain of joy there is to every believer, in what his Redeemer has done, and is ſtill doing for him. It is ſo great a ſubject, that we ourſelves may ſee how unfit a mortal tongue is to ſpeak of it: and therefore, I ſhall, in the entry, pray "that God may ſhed "abroad his love in our hearts; that he may ſend forth "his light and his truth, that they may be guides to us;" and accompany the word ſpoken with the powerful energy of the ſpirit of conſolation. But a little of that real communion with God which is the work of his Spirit, and which he ſometimes vouchſafes to his people, will give them ſuch a lively ſenſe of his love and joy in him, as they themſelves know may be felt, but cannot be expreſſed: and I cannot forbear already obſerving to you, that the meaneſt real Chriſtian ſhall, one day, in the higher houſe, have ſuch a fulneſs of joy, and ſuch conceptions of God and his Redeemer's love, that he ſhall look down, with wonder, at the weak and imperfect ſtretches of our imagination after it now. But ſo long as we are here, let us patiently content ourſelves with what is given us as neceſſary to ſupport our weary ſteps in this deſolate wilderneſs; with what this ordinance, inſtituted for enlivening our faith, ſupplies us for our comfort and joy.

For this purpoſe, let me beg your attention to the following conſiderations.

1. You ought to go to God, in this ordinance, *as your exceeding joy*, becauſe, in it, you have the fulleſt aſſurance and the cleareſt evidence of the forgiveneſs of your ſins, and peace with your offended Maker. This is the preliminary mercy which, with reſpect to fallen creatures, muſt open the way to every other bleſſing. Nothing ſo much damps our joy in God, and leſſens our ſatisfaction in addreſſing him, as conſciouſneſs of guilt. This it is that makes religion ſo unpleaſant to the carnal worldling; even the ſecure ſinner, who ſeems to walk without fear, is yet deterred by natural conſcience from drawing near to God. He does all in his power to rid his mind of the thoughts of God's ordinary and conſtant preſence with him in every place. A horror of his Maker poſſeſſes his mind at all times; he cannot love him as a gracious Father, becauſe he hates him as an enemy, and fears him as a righteous judge. Nay, the ſame thing it is that makes us all feel ſo frequently an averſion at the duties of religion. The cold hand of a ſpirit of bondage freezes up the affections. Trembling and fear taketh hold upon us. An inward dread and jealouſy of our own ſtate throws a gloom and darkneſs, as it were, through the temple of God. And, with whatever ſtrength or beauty the promiſes or privileges of the ſaints may be ſet forth, there is a ſecret reſtraint upon us, and as a voice diſcharging us from touching them, as forbidden fruit. Were we but as pure, and free from guilt, we ſhould, with as much joy and ſatisfaction, draw nigh to God, as the angels do in Heaven.

I have been the more full in opening this to you, that you may ſee the foundation there is in nature, and in fact, for the leading doctrine of the goſpel, "Chriſt Jeſus ſet "forth as a propitiation for ſins, through faith in his "blood."

His bleſſed body was broken, and his precious blood was ſhed, for the remiſſion of ſins. Are you to commemorate this? are you to receive the viſible ſigns and the appointed ſeals of it? does not this aſſure you, that your

ſins are forgiven for Chriſt's ſake? Are your ſins very great? are they many in number, and heinous in their aggravations? Conſider the infinite value of this ſacred blood. It was no leſs than that of the eternal Son of God, who chearfully undertook our cauſe: "and the Lord laid "on him the iniquity of us all." Iſa. liii. 5. "He was "wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our "iniquities; the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him; "and with his ſtripes we are healed." O unſearchable myſtery! O the infinite holineſs of God! O the tremendous juſtice of God! How well may the exhortation be preſſed, Iſa. i. 18. "Come now, and let us reaſon together, "ſaith the Lord: though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall "be as white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, "they ſhall be as wool." Well may we ſay with the apoſtle Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful ſaying, and "worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into "the world, to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief." Are you afraid of the condemning ſentence of the law, Gal. iii. 13. "Chriſt hath redeemed us from the curſe of the "law, being made a curſe for us." Are you aſhamed to appear before God in your own undeſerving character, hear, and comply with your Saviour's own counſel, Rev. iii. 18. "I counſel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, "that thou mayeſt be rich, and white raiment that thou "mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame of thy nakedneſs "do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-ſalve, "that thou mayeſt ſee." In the ſpotleſs robes of your Redeemer's righteouſneſs, you ſhall be adorned for the courts of your God, and dwell in his preſence. Are you afraid to apply all this to yourſelves? This is the expreſs purpoſe of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, to confirm and cloſe the covenant of peace with every partaker. Do you doubt the ſincerity of the offer upon God's part? See him diſpenſing the healing medicine, "This is my body, which "was broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye "do ſhew the Lord's death till he come." Hear him ſaying, Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labor, "and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt." Hear

him further saying, John vi. 37. "Him that cometh to "me, I will in no wise cast out." Isa. lv. 1. "Ho, every "one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that "hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy "wine and milk, without money, and without price." Rev. xxii. 17. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; "and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that "is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him take "the water of life freely." All who have truly groaned under a sense of guilt may here see their pardon sealed, and may and ought to rejoice in it, as theirs; and, unless they doubt the faithfulness of God's word, or the efficacy of their Saviour's merit, may triumph in both, and set at defiance the thunders of the law, the reproaches of conscience, and the accusations of the devil. They may say, with the apostle Paul, Rom. viii. 33, 34. "Who shall lay "any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that "justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ "that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even "at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession "for us."

2. You ought to go to God, in this ordinance, *as your exceeding joy*, as it affords the strongest and most illustrious proof of divine love. This, my brethren, is the immediate subject of our contemplation in the Lord's supper; and I chuse to consider it as an argument by itself, separately from its fruits, because nothing serves more to heighten our affection to, and delight in God, than a firm persuasion of his love to us. Is it a comfortable thing to have the pardon of our sins? It is also unspeakably refreshing, and even ravishing, to view, in faith, the wonderful means by which it is accomplished. We may consider, shortly here, the riches of redeeming grace, as extending to the sinners of Adam's race in general; and, then, what it is for every believer to consider himself as the determinate object of divine regard in the councils of peace. The whole perfections of an infinite God shine with united lustre in the work of redemption. His power, wisdom, holiness, and justice, are severally and jointly illustrated in it. His unsearchable wisdom is mentioned, Rom. xi.

33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and "knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judg- "ments, and his ways paſt finding out!" His mighty power, Eph. i. 19. "And what is the exceeding greatneſs "of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to the "working of his mighty power." The righteouſneſs of his government, Rom. iii. 26. "To declare, I ſay, at "this time, his righteouſneſs, that he might be juſt, and "the juſtifier of him which believeth in Jeſus." But love is moſt conſpicuous of all; and is therefore moſt frequently inſiſted on, John iii. 16. "God ſo loved the world, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever be- "lieveth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting "life." Rom. v. 8. "God commendeth his love towards "us, in that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for "us." Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19. "That Chriſt may dwell "in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and ground- "ed in love, may be able to comprehend, with all ſaints, "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, "and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth know- "ledge." And indeed, my brethren, it paſſeth the power of man to open fully the greatneſs of the love of God to ſinners in Chriſt Jeſus. It is a ſubject which we are ſo far from being able now to exhauſt, that it ſhall afford matter for adoring inquiry to all eternity, whilſt the everlaſting God lives and reigns with his ſaints, and unfolds to them, age after age, more ample views of his goodneſs and greatneſs. By what ſhall we meaſure the love of a friend, but by the greatneſs of his gifts? What ſentiment then ſhall we entertain of the love of God for his (juſtly ſtyled) unſpeakable gift? He has given us his only begotten Son, "who was from eternity in the boſom of the "Father; the brightneſs of his Father's glory, and the ex- "preſs image of his perſon;" the beſt and greateſt of created beings, nay, the whole creation itſelf, had been nothing compared to it.

The truth is, I am ready to think that there ſeems to be ſomething like divine contrivance, and infinite deſign, in this particular circumſtance. All created things are in themſelves equal, and alike eaſy, to the power of God,

being but the effects of his ſimple will. For this reaſon there could be no comparative greatneſs in any ſuch gifts. There was therefore but this one way left to expreſs an uncommon degree of love, that he who was one and equal with the Father, ſhould himſelf be employed in the meſſage, and "bear our ſins in his own body, on the tree." Nothing elſe could have made man an expenſive purchaſe. Nothing elſe that God could beſtow, would have had any appearance of doing violence to himſelf; or could give meaning and beauty to that expreſſion, Romans viii. 32. "He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up "for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us "all things?" The Lord of the vineyard, in the parable, is repreſented as in ſuſpenſe, how to fall upon a method to break the ſtubborneſs of the huſbandmen, Luke xx. 13. "Then ſaid the Lord of the vineyard, what ſhall I do? I "will ſend my beloved Son, it may be they will reverence "him when they ſee him." Let us paraphraſe and apply it. God, who bears the perſon of the maſter of the vineyard, may be ſuppoſed to ſay, what ſhall reclaim theſe obſtinate children of mercy, become rebels? Nothing but the invincible force of ſuperior love. But wherein ſhall the love of the eternal God appear to advantage? in nothing but an eternal gift: they ſhall not be cheaply purchaſed, they ſhall be bought with blood, with that ſacred blood, which ſhall be the ſurpriſe of angels, and the wonder of heaven. Theſe reflections I would make with reverence, on this elevated and delightful, but awful and tremendous theme. One thing appears clearly from them, that it is not only obſcuring the luſtre, not only weakening the force, but deſtroying the very being of redeeming love, to deny the proper and eternal Godhead of Chriſt, the Mediator. But, Oh! my brethren, what an improvement is it, to the contemplation of the love of God, for each of us to conſider himſelf as having been from eternity the object of it. While I taſte the ſtreams of his bounty, may I thus trace it back to its ſource! Did he love me from the foundation of the world! Did he pity me, when in unprovoked rebellion againſt him! Did he make ſo gracious proviſion for my recovery and ſalvation!

Did he make atonement for my guilt, by the blood of his own Son! and conquer my heart by the power of his sovereign grace! What returns of praise and gratitude are his due? With what joy ought I to remember my Redeemer's death at his table, in the hope of sharing with him his crown and his throne, in a higher state?

3. You ought to *go to God*, in this ordinance, *as your exceeding joy*; as you have in it the clearest and fullest assurance of receiving from him all that is necessary for your comfort and happiness, while you continue here. There are, in a strict sense, but two ends of going to God in his worship and ordinances, to express our sense of, and thankfulness for favors received, and as beggars for more. Now, my brethren, in this ordinance you are not only called to celebrate the love of a gracious and reconciled God, but to trust in the fulness of an all-sufficient God. That we may view this the more distinctly, there are these two kinds of blessings we stand in need of, those that relate to our spiritual life, and those that relate to our temporal comfort.

1st, Those that relate to the spiritual life. What is the great desire of every real servant of God in this house? Is it not to have your hearts more inflamed with the love of God, and more devoted to his fear? Is not sin your greatest burthen, and its remaining influence your greatest grief? Now, where can you have a more reasonable hope of getting your gracious dispositions strengthened, or your sins mortified, than at a communion table. Is it not expressly designed for your spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace? And as the institution of these sensible signs is a remarkable proof of divine condescension, so I can hardly conceive any thing more wisely and happily calculated for this excellent end. What can more strengthen your faith in a dying Saviour, than being allowed to look upon the signs of his broken body, and his blood poured out? What can speak greater peace to the conscience, than your being allowed and invited to receive him explicitly? "This is my body, broken for you." What can more happily serve to kindle and inflame your love to God, than the immediate contemplation of his

infinite love for you? Where can you take such a hateful view of sin, as a detested object, as at the Lord's table, where you see it in your Saviour's sufferings? Where and how can you lay such a bond upon the conscience, as by receiving the seals of this sacred engagement? How can you give such a deadly wound to your strongest lusts, as by nailing and affixing them to your Redeemer's cross? What motive of future obedience equal to bearing about in your bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus? See what the Apostle says, 2 Cor. v. 14. "For the love of Christ constraineth "us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then "were all dead." Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with "Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth "in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave "himself for me." What remedy can you find for your own weakness, like the all-sufficiency of Christ? Col. ii. 9. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." 1 Cor. i. 30. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, "and sanctification, and redemption." I will not so widely handle the subject as to cite to you all the passages which show that the spirit of sanctification is a part of the purchase of your Redeemer, and one of his gifts to those who humbly implore it. Is it not well known, and do not believers at his table, sensible of their own weakness, and confident of their Saviour's power, get their feet upon the necks of their enemies, and say, "I can do all things "through Christ strengthening me."

2d, They have here all things necessary for their temporal comfort. They have a complete remedy for their cares, as well as their sins. As at the Lord's table you lay hold of the covenant of peace, so there, if any where, you may see, that it is ordered in all things, and sure; your food and raiment, and all necessary provision, is contained in it; and Christ's body is the pledge. How gracious the promise! your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things, Psal. xxxiv. 8, 9, 10. "O "taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man "that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints!

" for there is no want to them that fear him. The young " lions do lack, and ſuffer hunger; but they that ſeek the " Lord, ſhall not want any good thing." Iſa. xxxiii. 16. " He ſhall dwell on high; his place of defence ſhall be " the munitions of rocks; bread ſhall be given him, his " water ſhall be ſure." Deliverance from ſuffering is contained in it, Pſal. xxxiv. 19. " Many are the afflic- " tions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out " of them all." Strength and grace to ſuffer with patience is contained in it, Iſa. xliii. 2. " When thou paſſeſt " through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the " rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee; when thou walkeſt " through the fire, thou ſhalt not be burnt, neither ſhall " the flame kindle upon thee." The ſanctified uſe and improvement of ſuffering is contained in it. Rom. viii. 28. " And we know that all things work together for good to " them that love God, to them who are the called accord- " ing to his purpoſe." 2 Cor. iv. 16. " For which cauſe " we faint not; but though our outward man periſh, yet " the inward man is renewed day by day." Conſider, eſpecially, that at the Lord's table you have an immediate view of the great foundation of reliance on divine Provi- dence, Rom. viii. 32. " He that ſpared not his own Son, " but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with " him alſo freely give us all things." That God, who was ſo laviſh of his love, as not to ſpare even his own Son, but gave him up to be deſpiſed, buffeted, and crucified for you, will not be ſo inconſiſtently hard, as to refuſe the ſmall gift in compariſon of a little earthly good. He whoſe ſoul was redeemed by the blood of Chriſt ſhall not loſe his body for a little bread.

I cannot help obſerving, here, of what univerſal uſe and benefit the doctrine of Chriſt crucified is, and how high a place it ought to hold in our eſteem. It is not only uſe- ful for aſſuring us of the pardon of ſin, but makes us ſupe- rior to all thoſe ſufferings, of every kind, which took their riſe from ſin. The path of a Chriſtian is ſometimes thorny and difficult; and many of the weaker order of ſaints have even a greater ſenſibility of the inconveniencies of life than ſome thoughtleſs ſinners. Theſe laſt maintain a ſort of

buſtle and conteſt for worldly pleaſure, and, with a ſturdy ſelf-ſufficiency, can, if I may ſpeak ſo, return the blows and buffets of adverſe fortune, while the feeble of Chriſt's flock become ſunk and heartleſs under a frowning Providence. But is not the Lord's table a place of refuge? and is it not matter of experience, that they have found conſolation there? Whatever their complaints have been, whether of ſickneſs, or poverty, or loſs of relations, or the ſlanders of their enemies, they have adored the ſovereign will of God in them all; they have been brought to a placid ſubmiſſion to his providence in them all; nay, they have happily ſeen and confeſſed his wiſe and merciful purpoſe in them all. It was not without a view to his trials, that the Pſalmiſt, in the text, deſires to *go unto the altar of God, unto God his exceeding joy.* And you may ſee how he expreſſes himſelf in the following verſe, "Why "art thou caſt down, O my ſoul! and why art thou diſ- "quieted within me! hope in God; for I ſhall praiſe "him, who is the health of my countenance, and my "God!"

4th, I come, now, in the laſt place, to obſerve, that this ordinance is a ſource of joy, as it is a pledge and earneſt of heaven; a foretaſte of that eternal happineſs which God hath prepared for his faithful ſervants in the world to come. This, my brethren, ought never to be out of our view while we ſojourn in this valley of tears.

This eternal joy is what our Redeemer has given us the fulleſt aſſurance of. It is he who hath drawn aſide the curtain, and opened to us a joyful proſpect into the holy of holies, into the bleſſed manſions of perfection, purity, and happineſs within the vail. In one of his laſt diſcourſes to his diſciples, when he was about to leave them, he tells them, it was to be but a ſhort ſeparation; for that he would come again, and carry them with him; and that they ſhould never more be divided, John xiv. 2. "In my "father's houſe are many manſions; if it were not ſo, I "would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you;" and not only hath he left the promiſe of his return, but hath inſtituted this ordinance, on the one hand, to keep up the memory of his former appearance; and, on the other,

to keep up our hopes of his ſecond coming, and what he will then beſtow, 1 Cor. xi. 23. "As often as ye eat this "bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death "till he come." It is intended to ſupport the languiſhing faith of his people, and make them tread, with conſtancy, in his ſtrength, the ſame paths of virtue and ſelf-denial that he did, in hopes of ſhortly ſharing his crown and reward, Heb. xii. 1, 2. "——And let us run with patience "the race that is ſet before us; looking unto Jeſus, the "author and finiſher of our faith; who, for the joy that "was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the "ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the throne of "God." And how highly proper is this inſtitution for pointing us to the glorious iſſue of our Chriſtian conflict? In it, we have, at once, a proof of the certainty—of the excellence,—and even ſome perception of the nature of heavenly glory.

How certain and infallible is that happineſs to the ſaints, which our exalted Redeemer, *the Amen and faithful Witneſs*, hath paſſed his word for, and gone before, in our name, to take poſſeſſion of? Heb, vi. 19, 20. "Which "hope we have as an anchor of the ſoul, both ſure and "ſtedfaſt, and which entereth into that within the vail, "whither the forerunner is for us entered."—1 Cor. xv. 23. "But every man in his own order, Chriſt, the firſt fruits, "afterward they that are Chriſt's, at his coming." However high an hope it may ſeem for ſuch as we are, to aſpire to a ſtation ſo near the throne of God, to his preſence and fellowſhip; yet it is not too much, after what is already beſtowed upon us; after what Chriſt hath done, it can beget no ſurpriſe, that this ſhould be the concluſion of it; after he hath borne our ſins in his own body, and with his own blood waſhed away our guilt; after he hath ſanctified and cleanſed us by his holy Spirit, made us the children, and imprinted the image of his Father upon our hearts; after he hath kindled in our ſouls a flame of divine love, and made us content with nothing but himſelf, and with no place where he is not; ſurely he will not leave us comfortleſs; he can have no other deſign than to carry us to live with him, and reign with him for ever and ever.

Does not this repreſentation alſo ſerve to ſhow the excellency of the heavenly glory? It is called in ſcripture, "the purchaſed poſſeſſion." And, oh! my dear brethren, how great, beyond expreſſion, muſt that inheritance be, which was ſo dearly bought, for which every price, but the blood of the eternal Son of God was rejected! See his body broken, and his blood ſhed; and there ſee what heaven has coſt; and this it coſt to him, who had dwelt there from eternity, and could not be deceived in its worth. It was no unneceſſary expence, idly thrown away, but what alone was equal to the glorious purchaſe. Had we nothing elſe, by which to gueſs at that, which eye hath not ſeen, this, of itſelf, ought to be ſufficient to raiſe our hopes to the higheſt pitch, and give us the moſt exalted conceptions of its infinite glory.

And may I not add, upon this head, my brethren, that this ordinance is, to many, an earneſt and foretaſte, as well as an aſſurance, of the happineſs of heaven. Is it not the ſenſible communion with God, which ſome of his ſaints even here enjoy, a reſemblance, though faint, of that full and perfect communion which they ſhall enjoy with their Creator and Redeemer in the world above? John xiv. 23. "—If a man love me, he will keep my "words, and my Father will love him; and we will come "unto him, and make our abode with him." What is heaven, but to be free from ſin; to contemplate the glory of an infinite God; to be filled with a ſenſe of his love; and to be beyond the reach of temptation to offend him any more. Now, when the believer ſees his pardon ſealed with his Redeemer's blood; when he is filled with a hatred of all ſin, and a humble confidence of being delivered from its power; when his very complaints are put to ſilence, and the frailties of a dying body are left behind, or ſwallowed up by the hope of a bleſſed reſurrection; what is this, but the very dawn of heaven in the ſoul! what is this, but the ſhout of victory! and an earneſt of that day of complete triumph, when all his enemies ſhall be brought under his feet!

I am ſenſible that the frame of many communicants will be but a bad emblem of heaven; and, if they meaſure it by that ſtandard, it will give them but low and ſorry no-

tions of it. This, however, is not the case with all; and and there are few real Christians, but, in some parts of their lives, have felt such inward joy in God, that they have been ready to say, with the disciples on the mount of transfiguration, *It is good for us to be here.* Neither is there any place where it may be more reasonably expected than at a communion table: every pious soul should breathe out this prayer of the Psalmist, Psal. lxiii. 1, 2, 3, 4. "O God! thou art my God! early will I "seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee! my flesh longeth "for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to "see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the "sanctuary; because thy loving-kindness is better than "life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee, "while I live! I will lift up my hands in thy name!"

And now, my brethren, what reason is there for every sincere communicant to go to God in this ordinance, *as their exceeding joy.* It points us forward to that blessed time when we shall indeed be satisfied with that fulness of joy, and those rivers of pleasures that are at his right hand. We are glad now, indeed, to help our flagging conceptions with symbols and figures: But then shall our eyes see the glorious Saviour standing at the right hand of God, surrounded by ten thousand of his saints, who have been redeemed by his blood. This life is but a scene of misery and sorrow, where wretchedness is often to be seen, and lamentations heard, even in the dwellings of the righteous; But then all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes, and these songs of praise begin which shall never end. Now we are borne down with prevailing corruption, which, as a dead weight, depresses our spirits: But then shall we be perfectly freed from all impurity, and serve our God and Redeemer with the same spirit and joy as the angels do in heaven. Now we are but as young unfledged birds, which in learning to fly can but flutter a little, and immediately take refuge in the earth: But we shall soon soar above it, rising with unwearied wings and never failing strength.

Let us forget for a little the weakness of mortality, and carry our thoughts to the general assembly of the church of

the firſt born, where no ſuſpicion of our falſe heart being admitted ſhall remain, when all the wide congregation ſhall join in celebrating the praiſes of Almighty God, and of the Lamb; and there ſhall not be one jarring or one diſcordant note in the univerſal harmony. Thus I have laid before you what a ſource of joy there is to the believer, in the holy ordinance which you now have acceſs to partake of, and proceed, in the

Laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject. And,

1. May I not, in a few words, obſerve how great is the goodneſs of God, in providing ſo rich an entertainment for us in our preſent ſtate. This life has been expreſsly deſigned, in Providence, as a ſcene of difficulties and trials. We are here in exile from our Father's houſe; yet doth he not leave us altogether deſolate, but hath given us this as a token and pledge of his love, before the full manifeſtation of it. Here is food to give us vigor for our journey, in this valley of tears: Strength to embolden us againſt our enemies, that we may hold on our courſe ſteadily, without wearying. Will it be matter of eternal ſurpriſe, that the only begotten Son of God ſhould do honor to our world, by taking up his abode in it, and dignify human nature by wearing it himſelf, and uniting it to his own? Is it not a continued proof of the ſame condeſcenſion, as well as an evidence of divine wiſdom, that he ſhould leave to every age this ſtanding memorial of himſelf, his appearance, and work, that ſenſe itſelf might be partner with faith, in rejoicing over his goodneſs? If his hearers were bleſſed with his heavenly voice, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, during his perſonal miniſtry, let us with admiration and joy, look upon the ſymbols of his ſufferings and death: let us ſurvey the picture of his agony drawn by himſelf, and let us remember what it promiſes, and what he is now gone to prepare for his faithful followers.

2. Let us, by way of improvement, conſider a little for whom this joy is provided; does not this need explication? And are not many of you ſaying within yourſelves, ſurely obſtinacy itſelf cannot deny, that here is

miſt, Pſal. xxiii. 5. "Thou prepareſt a table before me "in the preſence of mine enemies: thou anointeſt my "head with oil, my cup runneth over."—If any have been burdened with a ſenſe of guilt, the arrows of the Lord within them, and the poiſon thereof drinking up their ſouls, and God hath revealed himſelf to them, as pardoning iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin; if they have been enabled to lay hold, with clearneſs and confidence, of the great atonement, they have ſurely taſted of his love: Or, if a ſpirit of bondage and ſlaviſh fear has given a forbidding aſpect to the paths of piety, or hath brought a gloom and darkneſs upon the paths of providence, and it hath pleaſed God to ſpeak peace to their ſouls, by the Spirit of conſolation, they will ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. ciii. 1. "Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and all that is within me, "bleſs his holy name."——Or, finally, if any hath complained of a dead, ſlothful, ſecure frame, reſting too eaſily in the form, and minding little of the power of godlineſs, and it hath pleaſed God to touch their hearts and lips with a live-coal from off his altar; to command their attention by his word; to excite their affections in his worſhip, and to give a new ſtrain of Watchfulneſs and tenderneſs to the whole of their converſation: they have ſurely the greateſt reaſon to ſay, "Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul, "for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

2. The Lord hath dealt bountifully with you, if you can obſerve a particular mark and ſignature of his providence in your mercies. It is one thing to receive the bounty of providence, and another to diſcern and confeſs the hand that beſtows it. Even with regard to the bleſſings that are, in a great meaſure, common to every thing that lives, it is a matter of the higheſt moment, and of great influence in religion, to have a deep and ſerious conviction from whom they flow, to be ſenſible of the abſolute and conſtant dependance of every creature upon God. It places us immediately in our Maker's preſence; for, as the apoſtle Paul ſays, Acts xvii. 27. "—He is not far "from every one of us. For in him we live, and move, "and have our being."

But though this is not to be neglected, I have something farther in view, viz. When we can obſerve the particular ſteps of providence, as well as the gracious intention of it, as the fruit of ſpecial and diſtinguiſhing love. The footſteps of Providence are to be ſeen often in the means,—in the ſeaſon,—and in the nature of the mercy.

1ſt. When the means by which any mercy is brought about are extraordinary, and far beyond the reach of human wiſdom, it ſerves to ſhow that God himſelf hath been their help. Sometimes the children of God are left to prove the weakneſs of all created help, and to be urged in a manner to the brink of deſpair, that their deliverance may be the more ſignal, and may the more evidently point out the very finger of God. What a mercy is it, when the enemies of good men wait for their halting, and hope to overcome them, and yet they are remarkably delivered, and out of weakneſs are made ſtrong? See how the Pſalmiſt prays, Pſal. lxxxvi. 16, 17. "O turn unto "me, and have mercy upon me. Give thy ſtrength unto "thy ſervant, and ſave the ſon of thine handmaid. Shew "me a token for good, that they which hate me may ſee "it, and be aſhamed; becauſe thou, Lord, haſt holpen me, "and comforted me."

2dly, Sometimes the providence of God is ſeen in the ſeaſon of the mercy. It is beſtowed when it is moſt needed, or when it may be of greateſt uſe. When the faith of his people is beginning to fail, it frequently meets with unexpected and eminent ſupport. Pſal. lxxiii. 2. "But as "for me, my feet were almoſt gone: my ſteps had well "nigh ſlipt." v. 10. "Therefore his people return hi-"ther: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them." Pſal. xciv. 16, 17, 18, 19. "Who will riſe up for me "againſt the evil doers? or who will ſtand up for me "againſt the workers of iniquity? Unleſs the Lord had "been my help, my ſoul had almoſt dwelt in ſilence. "When I ſaid, my foot ſlippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, "held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within "me, thy comforts delight my ſoul." When they have duties of importance before them, they have ſometimes ſuch ſupplies of grace and ſtrength given them, as to car-

ry them through with comfort and with credit. Sometimes, to prepare them for trials which may be before them, they have uncommon measures of consolation from above; and sometimes under or after trials, for their support and comfort, they meet with all in the Creator, and much more than they lost in the creature. And I hope, my brethren, many have cause to adore the wisdom, as well as the grace of God in public ordinances, that directs his ministers, as well as his Spirit, to such instructions as may be most suitable, both to the wants and the desires of his saints. How excellent is sound instruction, at any rate! But what a new beauty and excellency does it acquire, in the eyes of that person, to whose inward complaints it is directly suited? We may say of it as Solomon says, Prov. xv. 23. "A man hath joy by the answer "of his mouth; and a word spoken in due season, how "good is it?"—xxv. 11. "A word fitly spoken is like "apples of gold in pictures of silver." Isa. l. 4. "The "Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that "I should know how to speak a word in season to him that "is weary."

3dly, Once more: The signature of Providence is sometimes seen in the nature of the mercy, when it is exactly suited to the state and character of the person concerned. Our temper, station, duties, have in them a very great diversity; and there is frequently an opportunity to observe how God dispenses his gifts with wisdom and propriety. If he gives to the rich, humility, thankfulness, or liberality; to the poor, patience, trust, and resignation; If he keeps the weak from temptation and trial; and fills with fortitude those who are to meet with resistance; and, in general, accommodates his mercies to their apparent necessity, can it be denied, that he deals bountifully with them. We are taught this truth in a very tender passage, Psal. ciii. 13, 14. "Like as a father pitieth his children, "so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth "our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." In many instances, indeed, this kindness and condescension is to be observed both in the nature of mercies, and in the measure of afflictions, Isa. xxvii. 8. "In measure, when it "shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his

" rough wind in the day of the eaſt wind." This leads me to obſerve,

3. That the Lord deals bountifully with his people, when he gives them a clear and ſatisfying view of the ſalutary end, and enables them to make a ſanctified uſe both of their trials and mercies. I need not tell you, that calamities of various kinds are inſeparable from this ſtate of mortality and of ſin; neither need I tell you that the children of God never were, nor ever ſhall be exempted from their ſhare. But, as their mercies have a quite different nature and influence, from thoſe which are beſtowed upon a careleſs, ſecure world; ſo their trials have a peculiar direction, and are capable of a ſpiritual improvement: nay, they are repreſented in ſcripture, as the fruit and evidence of love, Heb. xii. 5. " And ye have forgot-" ten the exhortation which ſpeaketh unto you as unto " children, My ſon, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the " Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." Pſal. lxxxix. 30, 31, 32, 33. " If his children forſake my law, " and walk not in my judgments; if they break my ſta-" tutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I " viſit their tranſgreſſion with the rod, and their iniquity " with ſtripes: nevertheleſs, my loving-kindneſs will I " not utterly take from him, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to " fail."

Now, my brethren, ſometimes the children of God may ſtruggle for a ſeaſon under afflictions, and find much difficulty to adhere ſtedfaſtly to their duty: nay, what do I ſay? truly they may ſin not a little by impatience in their hearts, and ſpeaking unadviſedly with their lips, as well as by ſinking under the ſtroke, and manifeſting unbelief and diſtruſt in the rock of their ſalvation. They may be alſo greatly at a loſs to interpret the language of Providence, and diſcover the cauſe of God's controverſy with them. They may ſay, with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxvii. 6, —9. " I call to remembrance my ſong in the night; I " commune with mine own heart, and my ſpirit made di-" ligent ſearch. Will the Lord caſt off forever? and will " he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for-" ever? Doth his promiſe fail for evermore? Hath " God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger ſhut up

" his tender mercies? Selah." Or, with Job, Job x. 1, —3. " My ſoul is weary of my life; I will leave my " complaint upon myſelf; I will ſpeak in the bitterneſs " of my ſoul. I will ſay unto God, do not condemn me; " ſhew me wherefore thou contendeſt with me. Is it " good unto thee, that thou ſhouldeſt oppreſs? that thou " ſhouldeſt deſpiſe the work of thine hands, and ſhine upon " the counſel of the wicked?"

But what a mercy is it, when it pleaſeth God to reconcile our minds to the will of his providence; to ſet home upon the conſcience his right of ſovereignty; his title to diſpoſe of our perſons, our reputation, our ſubſtance, our relations, without exception, and without condition, even as he will. O how happy! to be able to ſay, with our ſuffering Saviour, " O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs " from me! nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt. " And, again, if this cup may not paſs away from me, " except I drink it, thy will be done." Is this unreaſonable? Nothing leſs. Should he not do what he will with his own? Is it impoſſible? Bleſſed be God, it is far from it. How happy, my brethren, to have our corruptions mortified by ſuffering! to have the ſpirit broken by contrition and penitence, when the body is broken by ſickneſs or diſtreſs; to weaken our attachment to the world, when it is ſhowing its inſtability and uncertainty as our poſſeſſion; to hate the ſin for which, and not the God by whom the ſtroke is inflicted, let it be of what nature ſoever it will? O how happy to have divine conſolation under ſuffering! an angel from heaven ſtrengthening us! the ſoul following hard after God! when the believer is enabled to delight himſelf in God, even in the abſence of all outward comfort! and to ſay with Hab. iii. 17, 18. " Al- " though the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be " in the vines; the labor of the olive ſhall fail, and the " fields ſhall yield no meat; the flock ſhall be cut off " from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls; " yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my ſalvation!" O how happy is it, when we experience the ſanctifying effects of ſuffering, to be able to look back upon it, and find the bitterneſs and ſeverity over, or miti-

gated by time, but the fruits of it remaining, and daily gathering ſtrength! One affliction, truly ſanctified, prepares the mind for others to follow, and makes them both more tolerable, and more uſeful. He who has fought, and found conſolation in God, under one affliction, is refreſhed, braced, and armed for another combat; he is not ſo much afraid of new and unknown enemies, becauſe he knows where to find ſure and effectual ſupport. There is ſomething very noble and animated in that part of the apoſtle Paul's diſcourſe to the elders of Epheſus, which relates to his ſufferings for the goſpel, Acts xx. 22, 23, 24. "And now, behold, I go bound in the ſpirit unto Jeruſa-"lem, not knowing the things that ſhall befal me there; "ſave, that the Holy Ghoſt witneſſeth in every city, ſay-"ing, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of "theſe things move me; neither count I my life dear "unto myſelf, ſo that I might finiſh my courſe with joy, "and the miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Je-"ſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God." I cannot go through either every kind of ſuffering, or every kind of benefit we may receive from it; but we have the pleaſure of ſeeing the ſcripture ſaints, both in the Old and New Teſtament, bearing witneſs to the ſalutary conſequence of affliction. Thus David ſays, Pſal. cxix. 67. "Before I "was afflicted, I went aſtray; but now have I kept thy "word:" and ver. 71. "It is good for me that I have "been afflicted, that I might learn thy ſtatutes." And the apoſtle Paul, Rom. v. 3. "And not only ſo, but we "glory in tribulation alſo, knowing that tribulation work-"eth patience." And ſo certain is this truth, that, I am perſuaded, there is no ſerious exerciſed perſon among us, but is willing to ſtrengthen the evidence by his own teſtimony.

I may add, that the Lord deals very bountifully with thoſe to whom he gives the ſanctified uſe of their mercies; when in general mercies have not led to ſecurity or pride, but to thankfulneſs, and even to a holy concern to improve them to the glory of God; when great abundance of outward poſſeſſions has not led to ſenſuality, or profanity, or hardneſs of heart; but, on the contrary, to hu-

mility, uſefulneſs, liberality; when a numerous or growing family, children ſpringing up as olive plants round about the table, only fill the parents with a tender concern to train them up in the fear of God, and ſeaſon their young hearts with early impreſſions of religion; when, inſtead of a fooliſh jealouſy or ambition to have your children more ſumptuouſly dreſſed than others, your great care is to have them kept from the ſociety of the vitious, and to have them no way behind the very beſt accompliſhed in every branch of uſeful knowledge; when you are favored with the eſteem and affection of others, and God enables you to improve your influence by zeal and diligence in doing good.

Theſe are all ſanctified mercies; and, as the Lord deals bountifully with thoſe on whom they are beſtowed from time to time; ſo, in acts of ſolemn worſhip, it is an unſpeakable happineſs, when ſuch views are taken of our ſtate and ſituation, and of the aſpect of providence towards us, as ſerve to confirm and ſtrengthen every holy diſpoſition, and lead us in the paths of truth and righteouſneſs. In the

4th, And laſt place. The *Lord hath dealt bountifully* with thoſe whom he hath admitted to the moſt intimate and ſpiritual communion with himſelf; thoſe whom he hath carried above the ſphere of temptation, filled them with ſenſible joy in the Holy Ghoſt here, and earneſt deſires after the complete and perpetual enjoyment of his preſence in heaven. My brethren, it is no contemptible communion with God, when the ſoul is poured out in penitential ſorrow, filled with hatred of ſin, with a love of God's laws, or ſubmiſſion to his providence; when the Spirit ſhines with clearneſs either on commands or promiſes, and makes the heart approve and reſt in them; but there are alſo ſpecial happy ſeaſons, when the believer may be ſaid to leave his mercies, trials, ſins, and duties, altogether at a diſtance, and to rejoice in the contemplation of an infinite God. He is the proper object of the higheſt eſteem, and moſt ardent love of every reaſonable creature; he is the immediate object of delight and wonder to the celeſtial hoſts; and ſometimes he vouchſafes ſome de-

gree of the like exalted joy even to the ſaints on earth. It ſeems to have been the deſire of Moſes, when he ſays, Exod. xxxiii. 18. " —I beſeech thee ſhew me thy glory." And the ſame ſeems to have been the happy attainment of the diſciples on the mount of transfiguration; of which ſee the account, Matth. xvii. 1,—4. " And after ſix days, " Jeſus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and " bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and " was transfigured before them, and his face did ſhine as " the ſun, and his raiment was white as the light; and, " behold, there appeared unto them Moſes and Elias talk- " ing with him. Then anſwered Peter, and ſaid unto Je- " ſus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, " let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and " one for Moſes, and one for Elias." The luſtre of their Maſter's appearance, and what they heard of his intercourſe with the two inhabitants of heaven, ſeems to have made them quite forget that they had any thing to do on earth; or, at leaſt, made them very unwilling to return to their former ſtate.

How ſhall I explain this, or bring it down to the conception of worldly men? Perhaps it is wrong to attempt it; but, leſt any ſhould go away, ſpeaking with contempt or indignation of communion with God, as extravagance, enthuſiaſm, and folly, I ſhall take leave to ſupport it by the following illuſtration. Suppoſe any of you were, as perhaps you have been, admitted to the ſight of ſome exceeding ſtrange and wonderful appearance in nature or art; will not this ſometimes fill you with inexpreſſible ſurpriſe and delight? will it not, for a time, quite ſuſpend your attention to any thing elſe? Your buſineſs, cares, fears, and other pleaſures, will be all forgotten for a ſeaſon. Now, if this is the caſe, I deſire to know, why the glory of the true God, diſcovered in his word, and illuſtrated by his Spirit, may not, or ought not to be the ſubject of the greateſt wonder, and moſt exalted pleaſure, to thoſe who truly love him? The truth is, there is ſo much to be ſeen, that is ſurpriſing and aſtoniſhing, both in the nature and works of God, in creation, providence, and redemption, that the only thing that hinders us from dwelling

great cauſe of joy to ſome: but who are they? is it not a joy with which a ſtranger cannot intermeddle, that pertains only to a privileged few? This inquiry is highly needful, as the great ſpring of joyleſs communions is the want of a perſonal application of the bleſſings of our Redeemer's purchaſe. That I may neither unwarrantably diſcourage any, nor proſtitute this precious privilege to the unworthy, I ſhall obſerve, that this joy is truly applicable to all to whom it is deſirable; to all whom it may be uſeful, but in different lights, according to their different characters.

1ſt, All thoſe who have not only laid hold on Chriſt for ſalvation, but have ſome degree of humble confidence in the divine mercy, on whom the Lord has lifted up the light of his reconciled countenance. If there any ſuch among us, as God forbid but there were, they ought; but why do I ſay they ought; for, no doubt, they certainly will *go to God as their exceeding joy.* To you, my brethren, it belongs, with wonder and gratitude, to ſurvey theſe bleſſings to which you know your title, and to join in that heavenly anthem, Rev. i. 5, 6. "—Unto him "that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own "blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts unto God, "and his father, to him be glory, and dominion for ever "and ever. Amen." Rev. vii. 12. "Bleſſing and glory, "and wiſdom, and thankſgiving, and honor and power, "and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." Let your faith follow your riſen Redeemer to his Father's throne, and look forward to what he is doing and preparing for you, as well as backward to what he hath already done. If Satan be under your feet; if ſin be crucified on your Saviour's croſs; and cares and ſorrows kept at a diſtance I hope it will help you to ſome conception of the felicity of that ſtate, "where there ſhall be no more curſe, but the "throne of God, and of the Lamb ſhall be in it, and his "ſervants ſhall ſerve him."

2dly, In this ordinance there is matter of joy and conſolation to the fearful and doubting Chriſtian, who, not without deſires after God, and the remembrance of his name, yet is full of ſolicitude and anxiety, and dare not

positively affirm his own interest in the Saviour. What is set before us in this ordinance, particularly what I have this day opened up on the subject, will show how well it is fitted for strengthening the weak, and comforting the feeble-minded. But, to explain this propriety a little, let me ask you, is your doubt of God's willingness to receive returning sinners? This doubt the Lord's supper is a full resolution of; this table spread by his appointment, is an express stipulation, on his part, of pardon and peace, to all who are willing to accept of them on the terms of the gospel? Well, but what are the terms of the gospel? Infinitely free and gracious, on the one hand, and exceeding strict and severe on the other; full forgiveness to the chief of sinners, without any merit or qualification on their part; complete deliverance from the power of corruption; and sanctification by the Holy Spirit of grace. What then are the severe terms? Truly to accept of them just as fully and freely as they are offered; to receive forgiveness as mere mercy, which we have not deserved, and desire deliverance from every sin without exception; and to expect to obtain it, not from ourselves, but by the strength that is in Christ: the true self-denial of the gospel is the hardest sacrifice to human pride. Men may cry up morality, and boast of it, and trust in it, and never practise it; but heartily to approve of the whole law of God, and breathe after conformity to it, as the purchase of Christ's death, and the effect of our union with him, and giving the honor of it only to him, this, if I mistake not, is the obedience of faith. Now, do you doubt whether you have accepted Christ on these terms? This is not doubting, but refusing; and I have no consolation for you. But if you are willing that Christ should be all, and you should be nothing, and sincerely grieve for the sin and impurity that still cleaves to you, and even for your unbelief, and the hardness of your hearts, come to this table, and "my God shall supply all your "wants from his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

3dly, That I may, if possible, yet farther illustrate and commend the divine grace, here is matter of joy to all without exception: "Behold, I bring you glad tidings

" of great joy, that God is in Chriſt reconciling the world " unto himſelf!" You have cauſe to be thankful, that, for your former contempt of mercy, you have not been cut off from the land of the living, and condemned for ever to the flames. O that you were ſenſible what grace and patience is exerciſed towards you in your daily preſervation! that your paſt refuſals have not been accepted as your final choice, and your ſtate determined beyond redemption! I do, now, upon this ſolemn occaſion, when the body and blood of Chriſt, as broken and ſhed for ſinners, is to be ſet before you, by his warrant and authority, beſeech you, by the mercies of God, and pray you to be reconciled unto him. Shall I be obliged, on this ſeaſon of joy, amidſt ſo bright a diſplay of divine love, to unſheath the ſword of almighty vengeance, and denounce the terrors of the Lord? No, my brethren, I rather chuſe, now, to beſeech than to command, to invite than to threaten you; to ſhew you the wrath of God falling upon your Saviour than upon yourſelves; and ſhall not his love conſtrain you, ſhall not his mercy perſuade you, not to reject the counſel of God againſt yourſelves? Will you prefer the pleaſures of ſin, carnal mirth, and ſenſual riot, to all the bleſſed fruits of divine love? You will ſay, I ſuſpect that you have but a cold notion of all this profuſion of language about joy in God; it is becauſe you know it not. Do but taſte and ſee, that the Lord is good! I am ſenſible, however, it is in vain to ſpeak to any but thoſe who are weary of their ſins; and therefore I ſhall only, in our Saviour's words, call all thoſe " who are weary and " heavy laden to come unto him, that they may have reſt." As this ordinance is proper for ratifying former engagements, ſo it is alſo proper for entering into covenant with God, and ſolemnly giving yourſelves to be his. And oh that this may be a day and place, marked in the regiſters of heaven, when and where many joined themſelves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten or recalled!

3. The laſt uſe to be made of this ſubject, is to ſhow you what is your proper employment at the Lord's table. It ought to be a joyful, thankful application of the bleſſings

of Chriſt's purchaſe to your ſouls. Be ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God; not only celebrate his love, but improve it, by aſking, in faith, every thing neceſſary to your ſanctification and peace.—I ſhall ſhut up all, by deſiring you to uſe the Pſalmiſt's preface, in going unto God, who ſays, in the 3d verſe, "O ſend out thy light "and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me in- "to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles." In order to raiſe and elevate your minds, to fix and engage your unſettled hearts, apply to God, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, that he would diſpoſe you for his ſervice; that he would ſhed abroad his love in your hearts, and make you joyful in his houſe of prayer. And my earneſt prayer to God for you, is, that he would at this time, convert ſome, or (why ſhould we limit him?) every profane ſinner in this aſſembly; pull off the maſk of hypocrites, and ſhew them their own likeneſs; that he would make it a joyful communion to many of you, and a profitable communion to all. Amen.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DISPOSITION UNDER A SENSE OF MERCIES RECEIVED.

A

SERMON.

PSALM CXVI. 7.

Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

IT is the language of nature, as well as of grace, to cry to God in diſtreſs. When great extremity ſhows the weakneſs of all other help, there remains ſo much of God written on the conſciences even of the moſt profligate, as excites them to this duty. The truth of this obſervation appears from many ſcripture examples, as well as every day's experience. But though bad men may cry to God for deliverance from ſuffering, they know little, if any thing at all, of returning to God in duty and gratitude, for the mercy received, Pſal. lxxviii. 34,—37. "When "he ſlew them, then they ſought him; and they return- "ed, and inquired early after God. And they remem- "bered that God was their rock, and the high God their "Redeemer. Nevertheleſs, they did flatter him with their "mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For "their heart was not right with him; neither were they "ſtedfaſt in his covenant." See alſo the account of the ten lepers, Luke xvii. 12,—17. "And as he entered in- "to a certain village, there met him ten men that were "lepers, which ſtood afar off, and they lifted up their voi-

" ces, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And, " when he saw them, he said unto them, go shew your- " selves unto the priests; and it came to pass, that, as they " went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he " saw that he was healed, turned back, and, with a loud " voice, glorified God, and fell down on his face, at his " feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan: and " Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? " but where are the nine?" They all cried alike for the cure; but the greatest part soon forgot their obligation to their merciful Saviour.

It is no way difficult to account for this behavior in bad men; but, alas! it is melancholy to think how much of this unhappy disposition is to be found even in the best. When the pressure of any trial is felt, they flee to God as their refuge and security; with fervent supplication, and earnest wrestling, they intreat his help. But, though we must not charge any sincere servant of God with an entire forgetfulness of his goodness, or open desertion of his service; yet, I am afraid, that many are very defective in this particular; and that few, very few, preserve the same solicitude to improve their mercies, as to obtain them.

My intention is to apply this to us, who have lately been at the Lord's table; and, I hope, before going there, not a few were earnest in their prayers for the divine presence. Urged by the sufferings of this mortal body, the loss of outward comforts, the power of inward temptations, or a desire of the return of an absent God, or the quickening of a slothful spirit, they sought consolation in this holy ordinance; they went to seek the Lord, going and weeping. I hope also, and believe, that many went not in vain, but " found him whom their soul loved, found " him, and would not let him go." All such ought to imitate the Psalmist in the spirit that breathes through the whole of this Psalm; and, particularly, in the words of my text: *Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

I need only say, in a very few words, that the whole Psalm is an expression of his gratitude for deliverance from great sufferings, from enemies cruel and treacherous,

They were alſo of an inward, as well as an outward kind, as all his trials did ordinarily bring ſin to remembrance, and fill him with a humbling ſenſe of the awful judgments of a holy and righteous God. He ſeems alſo to have been particularly exerciſed in prayer to God his all-ſufficient help: ver. 3, 4. "The ſorrows of death compaſſed me, and the "pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and ſor-"row. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, "I beſeech thee, deliver my ſoul." He thereupon celebrates the mercy of God, and wearing the bonds of love, deſires to expreſs his obligations in the ſtrongeſt terms, and to ſatisfy them by the moſt chearful obedience: ver. 12. "What ſhall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits "towards me?"

In diſcourſing further, at this time, I ſhall juſt obſerve, that the words of the text contain the Pſalmiſt's reſolution: *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul.*—And the reaſon on which it is founded;——*for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* Theſe two, as applicable to the ſervants of God in general, and ourſelves in particular, I ſhall diſtinctly conſider, not in the order of the words, but in the order of nature.

I. I ſhall deſcribe the ſtate of thoſe with whom God *hath dealt bountifully.*

II. Explain the import of the Pſalmiſt's reſolution, which ought to be theirs: *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul.*

And then ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. Then, I ſhall deſcribe the ſtate of thoſe with whom God *hath dealt bountifully;* and I am juſt to deſcribe this, in its great lines, from experience, beſeeching every one preſent to hear it with application; and to add ſuch circumſtances to the ſeveral particulars, as will make them completely ſuitable to his own ſtate—Obſerve, then,

1. That the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thoſe from whom he hath removed any affliction under which they groaned, and for deliverance from which they pray-

ed.—If we would count our mercies, they are very many: and we often lose both the relish of them, and the benefit of them, by not observing them. Those who are delivered from sickness, or the fear of it, in themselves, or their relations, ought to be sensible of the goodness of God, who maketh them to lye down and rise up in safety.—If any had reason to fear confinement from ordinances, or from usefulness, they should say, with the Psalmist, Psal. cxviii. 16,——19. "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the "right hand of the Lord doth valiantly. I shall not die, "but live, and declare the works of the Lord; the Lord "hath chastened me sore; but he hath not given me over "unto death. Open to me the gates of righteousness; I "will go into them, and I will praise the Lord."—If any were oppressed with calumny and reproach, and God hath hidden them from the strife of tongues, hath pleaded their cause, or brought forth their "judgment as the light, and "their righteousness as the noon-day." The Psalmist says, Psal. cxviii. 10,—14. "All nations compassed me "about; but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. "They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me "about; but, in the name of the Lord, I will destroy them. "They compassed me about like bees; they are quench-"ed as the fire of thorns; for, in the name of the Lord, "I will destroy them. Thou hast thrust sore at me, "that I might fall; but the Lord helped me: the Lord "is my strength and song, and is become my salvation." If any are delivered from the fear of want, and a reasonable prospect given them of competent and suitable provision for themselves and families; if they can remember the time, whether lately or at a greater distance, when they seemed to be threatened with poverty and dependance, and all the shame, distress, and temptation that attends that ensnaring state; if, I say, the cany remember this, and see how God, by a gracious providence, has led them by the hand; has given them food to eat and raiment to put on, and even honored them with the ability and the heart to stretch out their hands to the poor and needy, the fatherless and the widow; surely he hath dealt bountifully with them. They ought to say with the Psal-

with delight on this great ſubject, is the ſinfulneſs of our nature, which too ſtrongly prompts us to flee from him. When therefore the believer is freed from the apprehenſions of guilt, and goes to God, as his God, in gratitude and duty, it is no wonder that he taſtes a little of that unſpeakable joy that is at his right hand. I doubt not, but many will ſay this is true. O let but the light of his reconciled countenance ſhine upon me, let me be but free from the doubt, ſuſpicion, and fear, ſuggeſted by my ſins, and heaven would immediately begin to dawn upon my ſoul!

As intimate communion with God may be ſaid to bring down ſomething of heaven to earth, ſo it always carries the deſires of the ſoul from earth to heaven. It is not only made up of faith and contemplation in the preſent ſtate, but of hope, which breathes after further diſcoveries in a ſtate of greater perfection. It not only increaſes deſire, but helps our conceptions. The ſoul, if I may ſpeak ſo, climbs up to the ſummit of preſent enjoyments, that it may ſee the farther into what ſtill remains. It ſays, as it were, if ſuch the glory and luſtre of the outer court, what muſt be the unvailed ſplendor of the holy of holies. You ſee the apoſtle Paul makes this uſe of comparative reflections, 1 Cor. xiii. 9,—12. "For we know in part; and "we propheſy in part; but when that which is perfect is "come, then that which is in part ſhall be done away. "When I was a child, I ſpake as a child, I underſtood as "a child, I thought as a child; but, when I became a "man, I put away childiſh things: for now we ſee through "a glaſs darkly; but then face to face: now I know in "part, but then ſhall I know even as alſo I am known." 1 John iii. 2.—"And it doth not yet appear what we ſhall "be; but we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall "be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is."

Alas! my brethren, that intimate communion with God ſhould be ſo rare, and that ſo few of us ſhould attain to the diſpoſition of the Apoſtle of the Gentiles, who deſired "to depart and to be with Chriſt, which is far better." Let us be aſhamed of it. Surely many of us have taſted a good deal, and ſeen a good deal more of the vanity of

the world, which ought to wean our affections from it. Happy, happy they! who can uſe the language of the apoſtle to the Philippians, Phil. iii. 20, 21. "For our "converſation is in heaven, from whence alſo we look for "the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who ſhall change "our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his "glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is "able even to ſubdue all things unto himſelf." And, Titus ii. 13. "Looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glo-"rious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Je-"ſus Chriſt." That there are ſome who have been formerly, and of late, ſo happily viſited with the divine preſence, I have little doubt; and to as many as have been ſo, ſurely I am warranted to ſay, *the Lord hath dealt bountifully with you.*

II. I come now to the ſecond thing propoſed, viz. to explain the import of the Pſalmiſt's reſolution, or his exhortation to his own ſoul, which all in the ſame ſituation ought to imitate, *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul.* It may, perhaps, be ſuppoſed only to imply, that he reſolves to forget his anxiety and care, and ſolace himſelf in that ſtate of quiet and ſecurity to which he was happily brought by the kindneſs of Providence; but though, no doubt, this may be conſidered as, in part, the meaning of the words, I cannot think it is the whole. It would be doing great injury to the holy Pſalmiſt, to ſuppoſe that he was not carried upward, in his views, to the Author of his reſt, or to God himſelf, as the reſt of his ſoul. The whole pſalm, indeed, breathes his piety and gratitude to God; and his deſire of teſtifying it by every proper and acceptable expreſſion. Taking the words, therefore, in this light, we may ſuppoſe them to imply the following particulars:

1ſt, Return, and give the praiſe where it is due; and humbly acknowledge God as the author of thy mercies. He had, as we ſee by the preceding verſes, earneſtly implored help from God in his diſtreſs; and, now, deſires to confeſs that it came from no other quarter. We are exceeding ready to fail in this particular; ſometimes we

look upon the outward means and visible instruments of our deliverance, and forget the Supreme Disposer of all events, who employs them, directs them, and blesses them. Sometimes we embrace the mercy itself with so much complacency, that we forget both our former necessity, and the author of our deliverance. In opposition to both these, it is our indispensible duty, to ascribe every mercy we receive, and every deliverance with which we are favored, to God, as its proper author, and to offer him the tribute of praise, and to bless his name for ever. James i. 17. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is "from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." I admire the manner of speaking frequently found in scripture, where the kindness of men towards us is immediately and expressly attributed to the agency of God, Gen. xxxix. 21. "But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed "him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." Acts vii. 9, 10. "And the patriarchs, "moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was "with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, "and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, "King of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, "and all his house." Dan. i. 9. "Now God had brought "Daniel into favor and tender love with the Prince of the "eunuchs."

How great a duty, and how important a part of religion, praise and thanksgiving to God are, may be seen in every page of the holy scripture, both in the way of precept and example, Deut. viii. 10. "When thou hast eat"en, and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God, "for the good land which he hath given thee." Psalm cxxxvi. 1, 2, 3. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he "is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. O give "thanks unto the God of gods; for his mercy endureth "for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords; for his "mercy endureth for ever." Psal. ciii. 1, 2, 3. "Bless "the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless "his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and for"get not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniqui"ties; who healeth all thy diseases." Psal. cxlv. 1, 2.

" I will extol thee, my God, O king ; and I will bleſs " thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bleſs " thee ; and I will praiſe thy name for ever and ever." And that this duty ought particularly to be diſcharged by thoſe who have been highly favored of God in any reſpect, is very plain. Though the glory of God is the ſubject of habitual adoration, and the conſtant courſe of his bounty, the ſubject of habitual gratitude, yet new and ſpecial mercies, give, as it were, a new ſpring, and add ſtrength and vigor to the ſoul in this exerciſe. Our praiſes ought to be particular, as well as general ; and thoſe who obſerve and record the ſpecial inſtances of divine mercy toward them, will find a fulneſs of heart in this duty, to which they are perfect ſtrangers, who ſatisfy themſelves with a general and indiſcriminate acknowledgment of the divine bounty. Many of the Pſalms of David are monuments of his gratitude, for particular interpoſitions of Providence in his behalf, and bear particular marks of reference to the time and circumſtances of his diſtreſs.

I only add, upon this ſubject, that the Pſalmiſt might well ſay, in this ſenſe, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul ;* for a tender and affectionate acknowledgment of the mercies of God, not only makes us find our reſt in him, but makes his mercies reſt with us ; it increaſes the ſweetneſs of every comfort ;—it purifies its nature ;—it prolongs its duration.—It increaſes the ſweetneſs of it : for this I appeal to the experience of every child of God. Do you ever taſte ſo much real delight in any mercy, as when you pour out your heart to God in gratitude for beſtowing it ; even in gifts from men we are ſometimes ſenſible of a higher value in them, on account of the perſon who gave them, than any worth they have in themſelves. This holds, in the ſtrongeſt manner, with regard to God ; the more we return our mercies in praiſe to the giver, the more we poſſeſs them, and the greater richneſs we diſcover in them.—It alſo purifies their nature. Many inſtances of divine goodneſs regard our ſtate and circumſtances in the preſent life ; they are the objects of ſenſible gratification, as well as religious gratitude. Now, when we obſerve and celebrate the kindneſs of him that beſtows

them, they not only ſtrengthen the body, but ſanctify the ſoul. Is it not ſomething more than barely outward proviſion, when we ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxiii. 5. "Thou prepareſt a table before me, in the preſence of "mine enemies; thou anointeſt my head with oil; my "cup runneth over?"—Again, it prolongs the duration of our mercies. One of the conſequences of the weakneſs and imperfection of the preſent ſtate, is, that we are ready ſoon to forget our mercies, and to loſe the reliſh of them. In how many inſtances do we find, that what gave us great and ſenſible pleaſure at firſt, becomes, in time, habitual, and, at laſt, indifferent to us? Now, praiſing, and confeſſing the goodneſs of God in them, ſerves to write them upon our hearts; to continue the ſweetneſs of common mercies; and keep up the memory of ſignal mercies, or thoſe of an extraordinary kind. Health, ſtrength, proviſion, and comfort, when they are not interrupted, are apt to be quite overlooked; but the daily acknowledgment of divine goodneſs, gives us not only the poſſeſſion, but the uſe of them. Signal mercies, in time, ſlip out of the memory, but the more we have acknowledged them, they will be the more eaſily recalled to remembrance. I have known inſtances of pious perſons, appointing fixed days of thankſgiving for extraordinary deliverances, which ſerved to renew their ſenſe of them, and gave them ſome degree, at leaſt, of the ſame joy and gratitude which they felt when the event happened. Some alſo, by keeping a record in writing of the paths of divine providence toward them, are able to read them over at proper times in their order, to compare them together, and thus, as it were, to have a rich feaſt upon a whole life of mercies, the remembrance of many of which would otherwiſe have been effaced by time.

2. This expreſſion may imply returning to God, and delighting in him as our reconciled God, and ſupreme portion and happineſs. This is indeed the reſt of the gracious ſoul, which gives him more joy than all outward poſſeſſions taken together. His outward poſſeſſions have no value, but as they flow from it, and lead back to it. He ſays with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. iv. 6, 7, 8. "There be

" many that ſay, Who will ſhow us any good? Lord,
" lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou
" haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time
" that their corn and their wine increaſed. I will both
" lay me down in peace and ſleep: for thou Lord only
" makeſt me dwell in ſafety. Pſal. lxxiii. 23, 25. Never-
" theleſs I am continually with thee: thou haſt holden me
" by my right hand. Thou ſhalt guide me with thy
" counſel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom
" have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon
" earth that I deſire beſides thee." Now, my brethren, this reſt is frequently diſturbed, and meets with interruption in the preſent life. Sin is the chief cauſe of interruption; it raiſes an interpoſing cloud, and ſeparates between God and us. But it is alſo ſometimes interrupted by affliction, and diſtreſſes of various kinds. Theſe two cauſes have a mutual relation, and a mutual influence one upon another. Afflictions bring ſin to remembrance, and ſin ſqueezes the bitterest ingredients into the cup of affliction; ſo that it ſometimes becomes a cup of trembling. The believer is often ready to miſtake the rod of fatherly correction for the exterminating ſtroke of avenging juſtice: hence the bitter and heart melting complaints of many of the children of God. Job. vi. 4. " For the arrows of the
" Almighty are within me, the poiſon whereof drinketh
" up my ſpirit, the terrors of God do ſet themſelves in
" array againſt me." Pſal. xlii. 6, 7. " O my God, my
" ſoul is caſt down within me: therefore will I remember
" thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites,
" from the hill Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the
" noiſe of thy water-ſpouts: all thy waves and thy billows
" are gone over me." Lam. iii. 1,—4. "I am the man that
" hath ſeen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath
" led me and brought me into darkneſs, but not into
" light. Surely againſt me is he turned, he turneth his
" hand againſt me all the day. My fleſh and my ſkin
" hath he made old, he hath broken my bones."

While this continues, the believer is excluded from his reſt; and indeed the more peace he can take in any thing, while at a diſtance from God, ſo much the worſe ſign it

is of his character; ſo much the more fearful ſymptom of his ſtate. But when the Lord hath looſened his bonds, lifted up his countenance upon him, and given him peace, is it not proper and natural for him to ſay, *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* When he hath ſeen the marks of diſtinguiſhing love in his mercies; when he hath taſted conſolation under ſuffering, or communion with God, in public or in ſecret, will not this diſpoſe him to reſt in God, to improve the happy ſeaſon, and deſire its continuance? All things elſe are vain, and have proved their vanity, but complete ſatisfaction is here.

I have no doubt, my brethren, that this is, if not the only, yet one of the chief ſenſes, in which we ought to underſtand theſe words. Reſt, you know, ſuppoſes labor, and even wearineſs before. Reſt alſo ſeems to imply that which is the end of labor, or the deſire of the weary. It alſo ſignifies that which is to continue, or that we wiſh to continue without further change. In this ſenſe it is uſed, Pſal. cxxxii. 8. and 14. "Ariſe, O Lord, into thy reſt, "thou and the ark of thy ſtrength. This is my reſt for "ever; here will I dwell; for I have deſired it:" which refers to the ark of the teſtimony taking a fixed abode, and being no more carried about from place to place. The ſame ſenſe is conveyed to us by Heb. iv. 9. "There re-"maineth therefore a reſt to the people of God." When, therefore, the Pſalmiſt ſays, *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul*, it means that God, and his favor, was his ſupreme and ultimate deſire, the very centre of his hope. Is it not ſo with every real ſervant of God? All true religion points to, and ends in this. All religion, without this, is an empty form. And when we return to this, after any interruption, is it not like the diſtreſſed mariner, after having been driven about in a tempeſtuous ocean, and threatened every moment with deſtruction by the riſing billows, at laſt obtaining ſight, and entering with heart-felt joy into a haven of ſecurity and peace?

3. In the laſt place, this expreſſion implies a confidence and reliance on God for protection and ſecurity againſt future dangers. This ſeems neceſſary to the com-

pleteneſs and perfection of any deliverance. The danger may be warded off for a ſeaſon; if there is ground to fear its immediate or ſpeedy return, the ſtate is very precarious, and the comfort very imperfect; but thoſe who are delivered from fear of evil, and think they can depend upon their defence and guard, have received a deliverance indeed.

Now, this is the view which a believer is particularly led to take of God, as his ſure and all-ſufficient help. He conſiders the greatneſs of his power, the operation of his providence, and the faithfulneſs of his promiſe. How often does the Pſalmiſt expreſs, in the moſt triumphant manner, his dependence upon God? Pſal. xviii. 1, 2, 3. "I will love thee, O Lord, my ſtrength. The Lord is "my rock, and my fortreſs, and my deliverer; my God, "my ſtrength, in whom I will truſt; my buckler, and the "horn of my ſalvation, and my high tower. I will call "upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praiſed; ſo ſhall I "be ſaved from mine enemies." Pſal. lxii. 5, 6, 7. "My "ſoul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is "from him. He only is my rock and my ſalvation; he "is my defence; I ſhall not be moved. In God is my "ſalvation and my glory; the rock of my ſtrength, and "my refuge is in God." Pſal. cxlvi. 5, 6. "Happy is he "that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whoſe hope is "in the Lord his God; which made heaven and earth, "the ſea, and all that therein is, which keepeth true for "ever."

My brethren, this truſt and dependence on God is a very conſiderable part of the reſt and comfort of the believer's ſoul. He is, on all hands, ſurrounded with enemies, liable to ſuffering, expoſed to temptations. The more he knoweth of himſelf, the more he feels his own inherent weakneſs and inſufficiency. But, in God, he ſees full and adequate proviſion for all his wants, Pſal. xxxiv. 22. "The Lord redeemeth the ſoul of his ſervants; and "none of them that truſt in him ſhall be deſolate."

This truſt is alſo, in a particular manner, generated, by remembring the paſt goodneſs, or by a ſenſe of the recent mercy of God. We have daily experience of our own

weakneſs and unſteadineſs in this reſpect. When our hopes are in any meaſure diſappointed; when calamities threaten; when afflictions viſit us, we are ready to yield to the dark ſuggeſtions of fear and deſpondence; but when we comtemplate the great goodneſs of God on former occaſions, or when we have met with any ſingular manifeſtation of his grace and favor, it ſerves to ſtrengthen our confidence, and often, indeed, to cover us with ſhame for our unbelief and diſtruſt. On the whole, then, a believer who imitates the Pſalmiſt in this expreſſion, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*, may be ſuppoſed to ſay, "Thou "haſt taſted, O my ſoul, of the loving kindneſs of God! "he hath brought thee out of deep waters; he hath "calmed thy fears; he hath ſet thy feet upon a rock; he "hath eſtabliſhed thy goings; Bluſh, bluſh! when thou "conſidereſt how eaſily thy confidence was ſhaken; how "prone thou waſt to ſink under affliction; and, upon eve-"ry new trial, to doubt his power, and diſtruſt his pro-"miſe. But, now, return unto thy reſt; lay aſide thy "fears, which have ſo unhappy an influence both on thy "progreſs and comfort. Commit thy ways to him, and "he will bring thy deſires to paſs."

I come now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid: And, 1ſt, From what hath been ſaid, you may obſerve one great branch of the ſinfulneſs of the world in general; forgetfulneſs of God; and unthankfulneſs for his mercies. How little ſenſe of the divine goodneſs is in the hearts of men? how formal, cold, and frozen their language in praiſe? how languid their endeavors to ſerve him, from whoſe indulgent hand every bleſſing they enjoy flows? One would think that here might be ſome hold even of worldly men, who have not wholly extinguiſhed the light of natural conſcience. The greateſt part of this diſcourſe has been directed to thoſe of another character. Suffer me, now, to ſpeak a little immediately to them. You are not inſenſible to worldly comforts; on the contrary, you love them too ardently; you ſeek them too eagerly; you indulge them too liberally. Conſider, I beſeech you, who it is that

bestowed them; who it is, that, when he pleaseth, can blast them to you, or withdraw them from you. O the blindness and infatuation of mortal men! How passing and transitory are all created comforts! how certain and speedy the approach of death and judgment! Think what return you have made for all the goodness of God toward you from the womb even till now. And let me beg every hearer to recollect how far he stands indebted to God for continued health, for plentiful provision, for remarkable deliverances, for early instruction, for providential warnings. And if God, by his Spirit, has raised convictions in your minds, or earnestly pleaded with you in his gospel, in what a terrifying light will all this despised goodness appear, when you come to the brink of that gulf which separates you from an eternal world, but, above all, when you appear before God in an unembodied state? It is my duty to set this before you with plainness and fidelity; it is your present privilege, that you hear the things that belong to your everlasting peace. May God himself write them upon your hearts, and constrain you to flee, by faith, to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

2dly, Let me also beseech every serious person, who now hears me, to consider how far he hath sinned against God and his own comfort, by forgetting the goodness of God, both in common and special mercies. It is surprising to think how little we make conscience of this duty, and even when it is remembered in some measure, in what a lifeless, heartless manner it is performed. How little proportion is there between the prayers of distress, and the songs of deliverance? how little sense upon our minds of the many gracious interpositions of divine Providence in our favor? If he hath invited us to communion with himself; if he hath brought us into the secret chambers, and made his banner over us to be love, how soon is it forgotten? how little desire of its continuance? what faint endeavors to recover it? how little concern to improve it? Strange, indeed, that some, after tasting of the heavenly manna, should feel so unseemly a longing after the flesh-pots of Egypt.

But do you not ſin as much againſt intereſt and comfort, as your duty? To forget a mercy, is to loſe it; to give thanks for it, is to preſerve and increaſe it. It is a very common miſtake for ſerious perſons to ſit brooding over their ſorrows, and, by that means, at once, to increaſe their ſufferings, and to prevent their deliverance. I do not know a more uſeful direction to melancholy or dejected Chriſtians, than by a deliberate effort of mind, from a ſenſe of duty, to recollect, and give praiſe to God for the many mercies which he hath beſtowed on them. This may be a happy mean of ſilencing their complaints, of turning the tide of their affections, and giving them "beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the "garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs." Is not thankfulneſs the improvement of mercies? and hath not God ſaid, to him that "hath ſhall be given, and he ſhall "have more abundantly; and from him that hath not "ſhall be taken away even that which he ſeemeth to "have."

3dly, I ſhall conclude, with offering the three following directions to thoſe who are truly ſenſible of the goodneſs of God.

1. Be circumſpect and watchful; though a thankful frame of ſpirit is of great advantage, both for your ſanctification and peace, yet it is not out of the reach of temptation; let it not produce pride, ſecurity or ſelf-ſufficiency. It is an excellent direction given by the Pſalmiſt to men in high ſtation and proſperity, Pſal. ii. 11. "Serve the "Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." Take heed alſo, leſt it degenerate into carnal and ſenſual joy, making you reſt with complacency in the creature, inſtead of being led by it to place your delight and happineſs in the unchangeable Creator.

2. Be publick-ſpirited and uſeful; if the Lord hath dealt bountifully with you, commend his ſervice, and ſpeak to his praiſe. This was often the reſolution and practice of the Pſalmiſt David, Pſal. lxvi. 16. "Come "and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what "he hath done for my ſoul." Pſal. cxlv. 5, 6, 7. "I will "ſpeak of the glorious honor of thy majeſty, and of thy

" wondrous works; and men ſhall ſpeak of the might of " thy terrible acts; and I will declare thy greatneſs. They " ſhall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodneſs, " and ſhall ſing of thy righteouſneſs." Let me recommend this particularly to Chriſtians of age and experience. It gives religion a very diſcouraging aſpect to younger perſons, when ſuch have nothing to utter but complaints. On the contrary, where can we behold a more edifying ſight, than an aged perſon ready to bear teſtimony to the peace and comfort of true religion, dying by neceſſity to the pleaſures and gaities of time, but living above them on the earneſt of his future inheritance; and, inſtead of a fretful ſpirit ariſing from the frailties of a tottering frame, preſerving a chearfulneſs and ſerenity of mind, in the hope of a bleſſed reſurrection.—I imagine I hear ſome ſay, nothing is more true; but, alas! I am not the perſon: I ſee nothing in me, but cauſes of complaint, or grounds of fear. I believe it is ſo with all; but you have miſtaken, or perverted the meaning of the exhortation. I did not adviſe you to boaſt of yourſelf, but to ſpeak to the praiſe of God. I believe it is good, in moſt caſes, to reſiſt deſponding fears, as ſo many temptations, and ſend them away, as hinderers of your duty, without a reply. Or, may I not juſtly ſay, admitting the truth of all that you can advance againſt yourſelves, is it not but ſo much the more reaſonable, that you ſhould ſay with Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10. " I am not worthy of the leaſt of all the mer-" cies, and of all the truth, that thou haſt ſhewed unto " thy ſervant."

3. Be frequent and diligent in ſecret prayer. This is the way to preſerve your watchfulneſs, and to increaſe your uſefulneſs. The more you converſe with God in ſecret, you will ſpeak with the more judgment and profit to men in publick. This is the way to diſpoſe of your complaints. What ſignifies repeating them to men, who may deſpiſe you, and, at beſt, can only pity you, when you may carry them to God, who can effectually help you? Speak as much ill of yourſelves to him as you pleaſe; but be ſo juſt as to ſpeak honorably of him, and his ſervice, to others who converſe with you.—Now, may the Lord

ſupply all your wants, from his riches in glory, by Chriſt Jeſus. May he give you the ſanctified uſe of every ſtep of his providence, whether of mercy or of trial. "May "the God of peace, Heb. xiii. 20, 21. that brought a- "gain from the dead our Lord Jeſus, that great Shep- "herd of the ſheep, through the blood of the everlaſting "covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his "will, working in you that which is well-pleaſing in his "ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt; to whom be glory for ever "and ever. Amen."

A VIEW OF THE GLORY OF GOD HUMBLING TO THE SOUL.

A SERMON.

Job xlii. 5, 6.

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

MY brethren, we can have no experimental knowledge; and, indeed, we have not much diſtinct knowledge at all of the nature of religion, as it takes place among angels, and other intelligent beings, who have kept their firſt eſtate, and never were polluted by ſin. From ſome things, however, recorded in ſcripture, we have reaſon to believe that they appear before God with the greateſt lowlineſs and ſelf-abaſement, that they are at all times deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of the infinite diſproportion between themſelves, as derived, dependent, limited, imperfect beings, and the eternal, immutable, omnipotent Jehovah. Thus in the viſion of Iſaiah, in the ſixth chapter of that book, ver. 1, 2, 3. "In the "year that King Uzziah died, I ſaw the Lord ſitting upon "a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the "temple. Above it ſtood the ſeraphims; each one had "ſix wings; with twain he covered his face, and with "twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. "And one cried unto another, and ſaid, Holy, holy, holy,

" is the Lord of Hoſts, the whole earth is full of his glo-
" ry." But if this is the caſe with theſe exalted and happy ſpirits, how much more muſt a deep humiliation of mind be neceſſary to us, who, by ſin, have rendered ourſelves the juſt objects of divine wrath, and whoſe hope of ſalvation is founded only on the riches of divine grace? We ought never to forget, that every inſtance of the favor of God to man, is not to be conſidered as the exerciſe of goodneſs to the worthy, nay, not merely as bounty to the needy, or help to the miſerable, but mercy to the guilty.

For this reaſon, as repentance is neceſſary to every ſinner, in order to his reconciliation with God, ſo thoſe Chriſtians preſerve the juſteſt views of their preſent ſtate and character, as well as the foundation of their hope, who frequently renew this ſalutary exerciſe. I cannot help ſaying further, that thoſe make the wiſeſt proviſion for the preſervation of their inward peace, who frequently water that tender plant with the tears of penitential ſorrow. To aſſiſt you in this exerciſe, and to point out the proper grounds of it, I have choſen to inſiſt a little on theſe words, in which you ſee the effect which a diſcovery of the glory and majeſty of God had upon his ſervant Job: *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.*

It is not neceſſary to my preſent purpoſe, to enter far into the diſpute between Job and his friends, although, no doubt, the words of the text have an evident relation to it. The controverſy ſeems plainly to have turned upon this point. His friends finding him in deep diſtreſs, under the moſt complicated affliction, would needs have it, that no good man could be ſo frowned upon by a righteous God; and therefore, that his former profeſſion muſt have been hypocritical and falſe. This is evident from the manner in which Eliphaz opens the charge againſt him, chap. iv. 6, 7, 8, 9. " Is not this thy fear, thy confidence,
" thy hope, and the uprightneſs of thy ways? Remember,
" I pray thee, who ever periſhed, being innocent? or
" where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have ſeen,

" they that plow iniquity, and ſow wickedneſs, reap the " ſame. By the blaſt of God they periſh, and by the " breath of his noſtrils are they conſumed." In oppoſition to this, Job aſſerts and maintains his integrity in general, and withal, affirms their opinion to be falſe, for that God, in his juſt and ſovereign providence, brings affliction both on the righteous and the wicked. That this is the propoſition which he all along endeavors to ſupport, is plain, as from many other paſſages, ſo particularly from chap ix. 22. " This is one thing, therefore I ſaid it, he " deſtroyeth the perfect, and the wicked."

Thus ſtood the matter, in diſpute, between Job and his friends, in which, though that good man had ſupported the truth, on the ſubject of divine Providence; yet, in the heat of the debate, and the anguiſh of his own ſufferings, he had let fall ſome expreſſions, not only of impatience, but of diſreſpect to the conduct of the Lord his Maker. For theſe he was firſt reproved by Elihu, and afterwards, with unſpeakable force and majeſty, by God himſelf, who aſſerts the ſovereignty of his power, and the righteouſneſs of his providence. On this diſcovery of the glory of divine perfection, the ſufferer was deeply humbled, and expreſſes a ſenſe of his own vileneſs and folly, in the 4th and 5th verſes of the fortieth chapter: " Behold, I am " vile, what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay mine hand " upon my mouth. Once have I ſpoken, but I will not " anſwer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." And, again, in the beginning of the forty-ſecond chapter, concluding with the words of the text.

It is not improbable, from the beginning of the thirty-eighth chapter, that it pleaſed God to give Job ſome viſible repreſentation of his glory and omnipotence. This was not unuſual, in ancient times, before the canon of the ſcripture was cloſed. But, no doubt, the diſcovery which chiefly affected him was inward and ſpiritual, carrying home, with irreſiſtible force, the great truths which we ſtill find recorded in a manner inimitably noble and ſublime. *I have heard of thee*, ſays he, *by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee.* This implies, that, as ſeeing gives a more diſtinct, full, and ſatisfying knowledge of

any thing, than hearing of it only by the report of others, the impreſſions which he then had of the majeſty and glory of God, were far ſtronger than any he had ever felt before.—*Therefore*, ſays he, *I abhor myſelf.* It filled him with ſelf-lothing and abhorrence.—*And I repent in duſt and aſhes.* This is either, in general, a ſtrong expreſſion of deep penitence and ſorrow, of which duſt and aſhes were anciently the ſigns; or, perhaps, it has a particular reference to his preſent miſerable and afflicted ſtate, deſcribed in chap. ii. 8. "And he took him a potſherd to "ſcrape himſelf withal; and he ſat down among the "aſhes." As if he had ſaid, Lord, I am deeply ſenſible of the evil of every raſh word, of every rebellious thought. I confeſs, that thou haſt afflicted me in truth and faithfulneſs; and that, in this low and deſolate condition, it becomes me to lay my hand upon my mouth, and to repent of that guilt which would have fully juſtified thy providence in a ſtill heavier ſtroke.

The words thus explained, preſent to us this general and moſt important truth, that a diſcovery of the perfection, glory, and majeſty of God, has a powerful influence in leading us to repentance; and that the clearer this diſcovery is, the more ſincere will be our repentance, and the deeper our humiliation. In diſcourſing further on this ſubject, at preſent, I propoſe, only, through divine aſſiſtance,

I. To make ſome obſervations, at once to illuſtrate and confirm the propoſition above laid down, as to the effect of a diſcovery of the glory of God. And, in the

II. And laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what ſhall be ſaid.

I. Then, I am to make ſome obſervations, at once to explain and confirm the propoſition juſt now laid down, as to the effect of a diſcovery of the glory of God. But, before we enter on what is principally intended, I muſt intreat your attention to the following preliminary remarks:

1. That this truth will hold equally certain in whatever way the diſcovery is made. It may pleaſe God to manifeſt himſelf to his people in very different ways. Sometimes it may be in a way wholly, or in part, miraculous, as in the caſe of Job, Iſaiah, and ſome others mentioned in ſcripture; ſometimes by affecting diſpenſations of providence; ſometimes by his ordinances, or inſtituted worſhip, accompanied with the operation of his Spirit; and ſometimes by this laſt alone, without the help or acceſſion of any outward mean.

2. I hope it will not be thought improper, that, in reaſoning on the influence of a diſcovery of the glory of God, I ſometimes bring in view the additional manifeſtations given us in the goſpel of the divine glory. This, to be ſure, could not be ſuppoſed to make a part of what was diſcovered to Job, to whom that myſtery, hid from ages and generations, and only opened in the fulneſs of time, was very obſcurely, if at all known. But the example, afforded us in the text, leads us to a general truth; in the illuſtration and application of which, we may make uſe of all that is known to us of the nature and government of God. The

3. And principal remark is, that, when I ſpeak of the influence of a diſcovery of the glory of God, I mean an internal and ſpiritual diſcovery, and not ſuch a knowledge as is merely ſpeculative, and reſts in the underſtanding, without deſcending into the heart. There is a common diſtinction to be met with in almoſt every practical writer, between knowledge merely ſpeculative, that ſwims in the head, and practical or ſaving knowledge, that dwells in and governs the heart. That there is ſuch a diſtinction in fact, experience obliges every man to confeſs: but it is extremely difficult to ſpeak in a clear and preciſe manner upon it; to tell wherein it conſiſts; or to ſhow how theſe two ſorts of knowledge differ otherwiſe, than by their effects. Yet even to point out their radical difference, ſeems neceſſary to me, who propoſe to ſhow the happy influence and powerful efficacy of this knowledge, when it is of the right kind.

For this purpoſe, my brethren, be pleaſed to obſerve, that a barren ſpeculative knowledge of God, is that which fixes chiefly on his natural perfections; or, if it be ſuppoſed to take in ſuch as are moral, it is only to reaſon upon them as an object of ſcience; but the true knowledge of God, is an inward and ſpiritual diſcovery of the amiableneſs and excellence of his moral perfections; or, to ſpeak more in the ſcripture ſtyle, to perceive that he is indeed "glorious in his holineſs. Holy, holy, holy is "the Lord of hoſts." This is the language of celeſtial adoration, of thoſe who "ſee him as he is, and know "even as they are known." The ſame, in ſome meaſure, is the view given to every real child of God on earth, and, alone, ſerves to diſtinguiſh his children of every rank, and every degree of capacity, from others of an oppoſite character. Let me ſuppoſe a poor Chriſtian, weak in underſtanding, and unaſſiſted by education, who is witneſs to any extraordinary act of divine power: for example, a thunder ſtorm, ſeeming to rend the heavens aſunder, and either laying ſome ancient and venerable pile in aſhes, or, perhaps, ſtriking ſome perſons to death, in a manner ſwifter than thought; he is immediately affected with a ſenſe of the ſovereignty of the Lord of nature, the holineſs of every part of his will, the duty of abſolute ſubjection in the creature, and the ſinfulneſs of every rebellious thought. But, above all, he is ſtruck with a ſenſe of the malignity of ſin, which has introduced ſo many natural evils, and, as it were, armed the incenſed elements in their Maker's cauſe. Such a perſon, though he can expreſs his thoughts but very poorly, nay, though he can hardly ſpeak to others with coherence or conſiſtency, ſees much more of God, than he who can reaſon on the planetary ſyſtem; who can trace the beauty, variety, and extent of the Creator's works, and thence infer the neceſſity of a ſelf-exiſtent, almighty, and intelligent firſt cauſe. The one may expatiate on the wonderful works, or the wiſe purpoſes, of the Author of nature; the other feels and confeſſes him to be God. Alas! my brethren, we ſee too often, that knowledge and holineſs in us, do not bear proportion one to another. We ſee every day

examples of the greateſt intellectual abilities, the nobleſt natural talents, being abuſed to the worſt of purpoſes; for ſuch I muſt always reckon, their ſerving no higher end than to adorn and ſet off the poſſeſſor, or burn incenſe to human vanity.—By a diſcovery, then, of the perfections, majeſty, and glory of God, I underſtand the glory of his infinite holineſs; that holineſs which is inſeparable from his nature, which ſhines in all his works, and in all his ways.

Theſe obſervations being premiſed, let us now conſider what influence a diſcovery of the glory of God hath in producing repentance, and increaſing humility. And, in the

1ſt Place, It hath this effect, as it tends to convince us of ſin, and particularly, to bring to light theſe innumerable evils, which a deceitful heart often, in a great meaſure, hides from its own view. There is, if I may ſpeak ſo, a light and glory in the preſence of God, which diſcovers and expoſes the works of darkneſs. That a view of the divine Majeſty has a ſtrong tendency to give us a deep ſenſe of our own ſinfulneſs, is plain from many ſcripture examples. That of Job, in our text, is one directly in point. Another you have in Iſaiah, ch. vi. 5. where the reflection of the prophet, on a view of the divine glory, is, "Wo is me! for I am undone; becauſe I am a man of "unclean lips, and I dwell in the midſt of a people of un- "clean lips: for mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord "of hoſts." Another inſtance you may ſee in the apoſtle John, who upon a view of the Redeemer in his glory, was, in a manner, deprived of life, through exceſſive fear. Rev. i. 17. "And when I ſaw him, I fell at his feet as "dead." The only other inſtance I mention is of the apoſtle Peter, who, on the unexpected appearance, or rather from a view of the power of Chriſt, manifeſted in a miracle, was immediately ſtruck with a ſenſe of guilt, Luke v. 8. "When Simon Peter ſaw it, he fell down at Jeſus "knees, ſaying, depart from me, for I am a ſinful man, "O Lord."

It is not difficult to explain how a view of the divine holineſs tends to diſcover and to affect us with a ſenſe of our ſinfulneſs. Nothing makes any quality appear ſo

ſenſibly as a compariſon with its oppoſite. The application of a ſtraight rule marks the obliquity of a crooked line; nay, it marks even the leaſt degree of variation, which by a leſs accurate trial would not have been diſcovered. Any piece of deformity appears more hideous and ſhocking when compared with perfect beauty. For the ſame reaſon, a clear view of the holineſs of God, and a ſenſe of his intimate preſence with us, tends to bring ſin to remembrance, as well as to cover us with confuſion for thoſe ſins, which before we were able to juſtify, palliate, or conceal. We are expreſsly aſſured that our firſt parents immediately after eating the forbidding fruit were ſenſible of their guilt, and I cannot think they were wholly inſenſible of the omniſcience and omnipreſence of God. Yet we find that their fear greatly increaſed (doubtleſs from a ſenſe of ſin) when they heard God's voice in the garden, Gen. iii. 8. "And they heard the voice of the "Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: "and Adam and his wife hid themſelves from the pre- "ſence of the Lord God amongſt the trees of the garden."

You may take a very plain and ſimple illuſtration of this from daily experience. Are there not ſome perſons of looſe principles and irregular practice, who, when by themſelves, or in ſociety like themſelves, juſtify many of their ſins, and to all appearance, commit them without remorſe, as innocent, if not laudable? But let the ſame perſons be carried into ſober company, eſpecially into the preſence of any perſon eminent for piety and gravity, and they will be reſtrained and aſhamed, and not able to open their mouths in defence of their licentious carriage. The mere preſence of ſuch a perſon carries inſtant irreſiſtible conviction with it, by forcing a compariſon between piety and profanity; that is to ſay, good and evil, light and darkneſs. So certain a truth is this, that one of the ancient heathen authors gives it as a rule for moral conduct, "that men ſhould always imagine themſelves in the pre- "ſence of ſuch a man as Cato, renowned for gravity and "virtue." But if the fancied preſence of a mortal, in whom ſome faint rays, if I may ſpeak ſo, of the divine Image appear by reflection, has ſo much influence, how

much greater would be the effect of a firm perſuaſion of the real preſence of a holy God, "who is of purer eyes "than to behold iniquity?" What is it elſe than this that makes wicked men flee the ſociety of the good as painful, and ſhun the thoughts of God as intolerable; ſo that it is the ſcripture character of ſuch, that they ſay unto their Maker, practically, "Depart from us, for we deſire not "the knowledge of thy ways."

2. A diſcovery of the glory of God ſerves to point out the evil of ſin, the aggravations of particular ſins, and to take away the excuſes of the ſinner. Let us remember what I obſerved in a preceding part of this diſcourſe, that it muſt be a diſcovery of the glory of the divine holineſs; not only a knowledge of the true God, and underſtanding what he is, but a view of his infinite glory and beauty in being ſuch. It muſt neceſſarily ſet the evil of ſin in the cleareſt light, that all ſin, as ſuch, ſtrikes immediately at the very being and perfections of God. When the law of God ſhews us our ſins, we may be ready to complain of its ſtrictneſs and ſeverity, and wiſh to ſlip our necks from under the yoke. But when we ſee that the law could not be otherwiſe than it is, without being faulty; when we ſee that it is nothing elſe but a fair tranſcript of the moral perfections of God; and when we look up to the great and bright original, it muſt convince us that all ſin is a direct oppoſition to the nature, as well as a rebellion againſt the will of God. If he is infinitely perfect and glorious, ſin muſt be infinitely hateful and abominable. No man can plead for ſin, in any inſtance or in any degree, but he muſt blaſpheme the nature and perfections of God, to which it ſtands in oppoſition.

All men, indeed, by nature, are enemies to God himſelf, in their minds, by wicked works; and they hate his law, becauſe it is ſpiritual and pure. There are alſo too many in this age, who have very relaxed principles as to the extent and obligation of the law, and, of conſequence, very ſlight thoughts of the evil of ſin. But a view of the glory of God rectifies, at once, theſe fatal errors, and carries home ſuch conviction of the rights of the Creator, the obligation and ſubjection of the creature, and the beauty

and excellence of that image which was ſtained by ſin, as forces us to adopt the language of the Holy Ghoſt; "How "evil and how bitter a thing is it to depart from the living "God!" God grant that there may be many in this aſſembly, who underſtand and feel the force of this truth! There is need, my brethren, to attend to it; for all convictions of ſin, which do not proceed from this ſource, or do not neceſſarily include this view, whatever pain or terror they may occaſion, will prove empty and fruitleſs at laſt. Though there may be a ſlaviſh fear of the power of God, unleſs there be a view of the infinite evil of ſin, there cannot be any laſting and ſaving change.

The ſame view alſo points out the aggravation of particular ſins. The more clearly we underſtand the nature of God, our relation to, and dependence upon him, the more will we perceive the aggravation of every ſin which burſts aſunder theſe bonds. A view of the glory of God muſt either be general, or particular; or, perhaps, for the moſt part, there is a mixture of both. My meaning is, that when there is a diſcovery of the glory of God in general, there is often, at the ſame time, a peculiar and ſtriking diſplay of ſome one attribute, of power, wiſdom, juſtice, or mercy. Now how ſtrongly does this impreſs upon the mind, a ſenſe of the evil of thoſe ſins which ſtrike directly againſt that perfection which happens to be ſet in the ſtrongeſt point of view? When any diſplay is given of the omniſcience of God, how does it make us ſenſible of the impiety and folly of ſecret ſins? Dan. ii. 47. "The "King anſwered unto Daniel, and ſaid, Of a truth it is, "that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, "and a revealer of ſecrets, ſeeing thou couldeſt reveal this "ſecret." When the power of God is made manifeſt, how does it aggravate the guilt of preſumption and confidence? Iſa. xlv. 9. "Wo unto him that ſtriveth with his "Maker: let the potſherd ſtrive with the potſherds of the "earth. Shall the clay ſay to him that faſhioneth it, what "makeſt thou? or thy work, he hath no hands?

When the wiſdom of God is diſplayed, doth not then all diſtruſt appear highly criminal? Ought we not to ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxvii. 1. "The Lord is my light,

" and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? the Lord is the " ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid?" When we have a view of our abſolute dependence upon, and unſpeakable obligations to the divine bounty, what a ſenſe does this give us of the ſin of unthankfulneſs, and forgetfulneſs of God? Of how many unhappy ſenſualiſts may this complaint be made? Iſa. i. 2, 3. " Hear, O heavens, " and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath ſpoken, I have " nouriſhed and brought up children, and they have re- " belled againſt me. The ox knoweth his owner, and " the aſs his maſter's crib: but Iſrael doth not know, my " people doth not conſider." Without any further enumeration, it will appear undeniable, that the clearer the diſcovery of the glory of God, the more muſt not only the evil of ſin in general appear, but every particular crime muſt be loaded with new aggravations. I cannot help mentioning here, in a few words, that this is the immediate effect of a diſcovery of the glory of God, as it ſhines in Jeſus Chriſt. The unmerited, unparalleled love, manifeſted to ſinners in the goſpel, greatly aggravates their ingratitude and rebellion. And the more that believers reflect upon their own conduct; and compare it with the grace and condeſcenſion of their Redeemer, the more they muſt *abhor themſelves, and repent in duſt and aſhes.*

I only add, on this head, that a diſcovery of the glory of God takes away the excuſes of the ſinner. How prone men are to excuſe and palliate their ſins, we all know by experience. It is a light ſenſe of the evil of ſin, that leads us to commit it; and there is no reaſon to be ſurpriſed, if this, joined with ſelf-intereſt, makes us ingenious in forming an apology for it after the commiſſion. Hence often ariſe hard thoughts of the threatenings of God againſt ſin, as ſevere. Hence alſo unbelieving thoughts, which will not admit, that ever he will fulfil his word, or execute the threatened judgment. But a diſcovery of the glory of God, particularly of his infinite holineſs, by ſhewing the evil of ſin in its proper colours, ſtops every mouth, drags the ſinner into the preſence of his Judge, and ſtrips the guilty criminal of every vain plea. We ſee plainly, in the caſe of Job, that he had ſuch a view of the power, do-

minion, and abſolute ſovereignty of God, as put him entirely to ſilence, and convinced him, that there was no room for contending; no place for compariſon between ſo unequal (muſt I call them) parties, God and man, Job xl. 4. "Behold I am vile; what ſhall I anſwer thee? I "will lay my hand upon my mouth."

This right of ſovereignty in God, and the duty of abſolute, immediate, unconditional ſubjection in the creature, I find plainly and frequently eſtabliſhed in ſcripture. It is, indeed, entirely in this ſtyle, which may well be called the ſtyle of the King of kings, that God ſpeaks to Job in the four chapters preceding that where my text lies. Though he is brought in ſpeaking, to reſolve a difficulty in providence; yet, you may obſerve, he does not ſay one word as to the juſtice of his proceeding; but, under many of the ſtrongeſt images, ſets forth his irreſiſtible power, chap. xxxviii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, "Who is this that "darkeneth counſel by words without knowledge? Gird "up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, "and anſwer thou me. Where waſt thou when I laid "the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou haſt "underſtanding. Who hath laid the meaſures thereof, "if thou knoweſt? or who hath ſtretched the line upon "it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof faſtened? "or who laid the corner ſtone thereof?" And, again, chap. xl. 8, 9, 10, 11. "Wilt thou alſo diſannul my "judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayeſt be "righteous? Haſt thou an arm like God? or canſt thou "thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyſelf now with "majeſty and excellency, and array thyſelf with glory "and beauty. Caſt abroad the rage of thy wrath: and "behold every one that is proud, and abaſe him."

The ſovereignty of God, is what, of all things elſe, ſinners, while they continue in that character, are leaſt capable of underſtanding, and leaſt willing to ſubmit to. This is not to be wondered at, becauſe the very nature of ſin conſiſts in caſting off our allegiance, and, as far as in us lies, rejecting the authority of God. But, my brethren, a real diſcovery of his glory, at once, raiſes him to the throne, and humbles us at his footſtool, and is, as if we

heard a voice from heaven, addreſſed to us in the following ſtriking words, Iſa. ii. 10, 11. "Enter into the "rock, and hide thee in the duſt, for fear of the Lord, "and for the glory of his majeſty. The loſty looks of "man ſhall be humbled, and the haughtineſs of men ſhall "be bowed down; and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted in "that day." One who hath ſo known God, will perceive, that there can be no more proper reply to objections, on the part of man, to the divine procedure, than that of the apoſtle Paul, Rom. ix. 20. "Nay, but, O man, who "art thou that replieſt againſt God?"

3. A diſcovery of the glory of God ſerves to point out the danger of ſin. It is the hope of impunity, that emboldens the ſinner to tranſgreſs, and to perſiſt in his tranſgreſſions. For this reaſon, we find the ſcriptures, in general, attributing the impenitence of ſinners to theſe two great ſources, ignorance and unbelief, Pſal. xiv. 1. "The "fool hath ſaid in his heart, there is no God." And, in ver. 4. "Have all the workers of iniquity no know-"ledge?" that is to ſay, ſuch bold rebellion in their conduct plainly diſcovers the atheiſm of their hearts. To the ſame purpoſe, Pſal. x. 11, 13. "He hath ſaid in his "heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth his face; he will "never ſee it.—Wherefore doth the wicked contemn "God? He hath ſaid in his heart, thou wilt not require "it." But a diſcovery of the divine glory, at once deſtroys the foundation of this ſtupid ſecurity, and impious preſumption. It realizes the very being of God more than before, as is plainly implied in the words of Job: *I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee.* It makes his preſence ſenſible, and teaches us, that "all things are naked before him." So that there is hope of lying concealed. It ſets before us his holineſs and juſtice; that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. So that, while his nature continues the ſame, the guilty and impenitent cannot poſſibly obtain pardon. Above all, it ſets before us the terror of his power, which is infinite and boundleſs; ſo that nothing can be more vain, than for the ſinner to hope either to eſcape or reſiſt.

Agreeably to all this, we find, that, in the holy ſcriptures, in which God hath been pleaſed to make himſelf known to us by external revelation, it is by aſſerting, and, as it were, diſplaying, and producing to view, the glory of his infinite perfection, that he endeavors to deter us from ſin, and animate or encourage us to duty. When God gave the law to the children of Iſrael, he gave them, at the ſame time, a diſplay of his greatneſs and majeſty in a very awful manner. To expreſs his ſovereign authority, and the abſolute propriety he had in them, he introduces it with theſe words: "I am the Lord, thy God, "which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the "houſe of bondage." You may alſo remember, how often, in appointing the ſeveral Moſaic conſtitutions, theſe ſignificative words are repeated, *I am the Lord.* In the ſame manner, to impreſs his people with a ſenſe of the evil of ſin, as committed againſt ſuch a God, he declares his own abſolute dominion, Mal. i. 14. "But curſed be "the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and vow-"eth and ſacrifieth to the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am "a great King, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, and my name is "dreadful among the heathen."

When he would give his people a deep conviction of the folly and danger of ſecret ſins, he ſets forth his omniſcience and omnipreſence, Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. "Am I a "God at hand, and not a God afar off? Can any hide "himſelf in ſecret places, that I ſhall not ſee him? ſaith "the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? ſaith the "Lord." When he would expreſs the danger of obſtinacy and diſobedience, he gives a very lively idea of his infinite power, Jer. v. 22. "Fear ye not me? ſaith the "Lord: will ye not tremble at my preſence, which have "placed the ſand for the bound of the ſea, by a perpetual "decree, that it cannot paſs it; and though the waves "thereof toſs themſelves, yet can they not prevail; though "they roar, yet can they not paſs over it."

The very ſame thing he doth to encourage the truſt of his own people, Iſa. xliv. 6. "Thus ſaith the Lord, the King "of Iſrael, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hoſts, I am the "firſt, and I am the laſt, and beſides me there is no God." When he would make us ſenſible, that, if we continue in

ſin, it is impoſſible for us to eſcape puniſhment, what a terrible repreſentation does he give of his dreadful and irreſiſtible vengeance? Prophecies of Nah. i. 5, 6. "The "mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the "earth is burnt at his preſence, yea, the world, and all "that dwell therein. Who can ſtand before his indig-"nation? and who can abide in the fierceneſs of his an-"ger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are "thrown down by him."

Thus we ſee, that God, in ſcripture, reveals the glory of his own nature, as the effectual means of reſtraining us in the commiſſion of ſin, or turning us from it; and plainly ſuppoſes, that nothing but ignorance of him can encourage ſinners in their rebellion. Neither can it be denied, that when there is an inward and powerful diſcovery of theſe truths to the mind, it muſt lead us to repentance, and lay us proſtrate before his throne, in obedience and ſubmiſſion. Who, that knoweth the Almighty, will run upon the thick boſſes of his buckler? or will not rather uſe this dutiful language of Job, chap. ix. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. "I know it is ſo of a truth; but how ſhould man be juſt "with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot an-"ſwer him one of a thouſand. He is wiſe in heart, and "mighty in ſtrength: who hath hardeneth himſelf againſt "him, and hath proſpered? which removeth the moun-"tains, and they know not; which overturneth them in "his anger; which ſhaketh the earth out of her place, "and the pillars thereof tremble."

4. In the laſt place, a view of the divine glory tends to lead us to repentance, as it ſets forth his infinite mercy, and affords encouragement to, as well as points out the profit of repentance. Juſt and proper conceptions of God cannot be given us, without including his great mercy. This bright perfection ſhone, even on Mount Sinai, through all the terrors of that legal diſpenſation, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. "And he ſaid, I beſeech thee, ſhew me "thy glory. And he ſaid, I will make all my goodneſs to "paſs before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the "the Lord before thee; and I will be gracious to whom "I will be gracious, and will ſhew mercy on whom I

" will ſhew mercy." Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7. " And the " Lord deſcended in the cloud, and ſtood with him there, " and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord " paſſed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the " Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and " abundant in goodneſs and truth, keeping mercy for " thouſands, forgiving iniquity, and tranſgreſſion, and " ſin." Without the knowledge of this amiable attribute, all the other perfections of God would ſignify little to bring us to true repentance. Without this, they carry nothing in them but unmixed terror to the guilty. Without this, therefore, the conſideration of his infinite holineſs and purity, his inflexible juſtice, and almighty power, would only ſerve to drive us further from him, by throwing us into abſolute deſpair. But when, to all the other perfections of God, we join his infinite mercy, the true knowledge of him ſerves not only to deſtroy criminal preſumption, but to animate to dutiful ſubmiſſion. Thus the Pſalmiſt expreſſes himſelf, Pſalm cxxx. 3, 4. " If thou, " Lord, ſhouldeſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall " ſtand? But there is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou " mayeſt be feared." Here you may obſerve, that, when he ſays, " there is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt " be feared," he not only means, that there is encouragement to ſerve God, but that his mercy itſelf leads to that filial reverence which is ſo eſſential a part of true penitence. The greatneſs and mercy of God happily conſpire in melting the heart of the ſinner. There is an expreſſion of ſingular beauty, Hoſ. iii. 5. " Afterward ſhall " the children of Iſrael return, and ſeek the Lord, their " God, and David, their King; and ſhall fear the Lord, " and his goodneſs, in the latter days."

This leads me to obſerve, that it is in the goſpel of our Lord and Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt, that we have the brighteſt and cleareſt diſplay of divine mercy. It is in Chriſt, that we have the true and ſaving diſcovery of the glory and perfections of God. And it is particularly in him, that we have an united illuſtration, and joint diſplay of greatneſs and goodneſs, of majeſty and mercy. In the undertaking of our bleſſed Redeemer, we have a very clear and

affecting view of thofe perfections, that fhew the evil of fin, and the danger of the finner. Never did the holinefs of God fhine brighter, or his hatred and indignation againft fin, appear with greater terror, than when the fword of his juftice was drawn out againft *the man who is his fellow*. When God fwept away a polluted world by an univerfal deluge; when he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimftone from heaven; when the earth opened her mouth, and fwallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Thefe were terrible proofs of his hatred of fin, of the juftice and holinefs of his nature. Yet were they, after all, but faint evidences, in comparifon of what were given, when "he who was in the form of "God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, "—was found in fafhion as a man, and became obedient "unto death, even the death of the crofs."

But, at the fame time, in this great event, hath he not magnified his love? Rom. v. 8. "But God hath com-"mended his love towards us, in that while we were yet "finners, Chrift died for us." How fhall we think or fpeak on this unfathomable fubject? Chrift Jefus is the fruit of the Father's everlafting love to finners of mankind. How great the giver! how unfpeakable the gift! how mean and worthlefs the objects of his love! God is love. Power, wifdom, holinefs, and juftice, fhine, indeed, in the doctrine of the crofs. But, above all, grace and mercy prevail "and reign through righteoufnefs unto "eternal life." What a melting view to every convincing finner! Zech. xii. 10. "—They fhall look upon me, "whom they have pierced, and they fhall mourn for "him, as one that mourneth for his only fon, and fhall "be in bitternefs for him, as one that is in bitternefs for "his firft-born." Muft they not, with Job, *abhor themfelves, and repent in dust and ashes?* This is a circumftance frequently taken notice of with regard to the gofpel converts. Jer. xxxi. 9. "They fhall come with "weeping; and with fupplications will I lead them. Jer. "v. 4, 5. In thofe days, and in that time, faith the "Lord, the children of Ifrael fhall come, they, and the "children of Judah together, going and weeping; they

" ſhall go and ſeek the Lord, their God. They ſhall aſk " the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, ſaying, " Come, and let us join ourſelves to the Lord in a perpe- " tual covenant, that ſhall not be forgotten." I ſhall cloſe this head, by addreſſing to you the words of God to the children of Iſrael, Joel ii. 12, 13. " Therefore alſo " now, ſaith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your " heart, and with faſting, and with weeping, and with " mourning, and rent your heart, and not your gar- " ments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is " gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great " kindneſs, and repenteth him of the evil."

I proceed, now, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1. You may learn, from this ſubject, the force and meaning of thoſe paſſages of ſcripture, in which the whole of religion is impreſſed by the knowledge of God. Thus, Prov. ix. 10. " The fear of the Lord is the beginning of " wiſdom; and the knowledge of the holy is underſtand- " ing." The ſame thing is affirmed by our bleſſed Saviour, John xvii. 3. " And this is life eternal, that they " might know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, " whom thou haſt ſent." On the other hand, wicked men are often deſcribed by this ſhort and expreſſive character, that they know not God, as in 2 Theſſ. i. 8. " —In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know " not God." The truth is, God is either wholly unknown, or greatly miſtaken by wicked men. None but his ſervants do truly ſee his glory; and the more they ſee of him, the more they are aſſimilated to him. Thus the apoſtle Paul deſcribes converſion in the following terms, 2 Cor. iv. 6. " For God, who commanded the light to ſhine out of " darkneſs, hath ſhined in our hearts, to give the light " of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of " Jeſus Chriſt." And, in the ſame epiſtle, chap. iii. 18, he thus deſcribes the progreſs of the chriſtian life, " But " we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glaſs, the " glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image, " from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

2. From what hath been ſaid on this ſubject, you may learn the great danger of a ſtate of ignorance. If repentance, which is the beginning of true religion, takes its riſe from a knowledge of the nature and perfections of God, does it not follow, that thoſe who are groſsly ignorant, are not only in a contemptible, but in a deplorable ſtate? that they muſt be ſtrangers to the power and practice of religion, and, dying in that condition, muſt periſh eternally? It is much to be lamented, that even amongſt us, who have the means of inſtruction in ſo great plenty, there are ſtill many who continue groſsly ignorant. How inexcuſable are thoſe parents, who do not make conſcience of diligently training up their children in the knowledge of the things that belong to their eternal peace? I muſt alſo intreat all heads of families, whom God hath enabled to hire the labor of others, ſeriouſly to think of the obligation that lies upon them, to inſtruct their ſervants in the principles of religion, and not ſuffer any under their roof to periſh for lack of knowledge. Do not think you have done enough, when you have given them food and wages, if you wholly neglect their precious ſouls. I do not expect to prevail upon you, faithfully to diſcharge this duty, by any arguments but thoſe drawn from the glory of God, and your own everlaſting intereſt; but I cannot help, at the ſame time, putting you in mind, that it is very much for your temporal intereſt. Depend upon it, the more conſcientiouſly you diſcharge your duty to them, the more honeſtly, diligently, and chearfully will they ſerve you. It is very common to hear complaints of the ſlothfulneſs, unfaithfulneſs, and inſolence of ſervants; but, if we conſider, ſeriouſly, what belongs to the duty of a maſter, there will be found, perhaps, as many, and as great faults, on this ſide as on the other. It is ſurpriſing, that ſome ſeem to expect, in a poor uneducated creature, all manner of decency of behavior, ſweetneſs of temper, integrity, and diligence, and are ready to ſtorm upon the leaſt defect, while, at the ſame time, they ſhow no example in their own conduct, but of a viſible neglect of duty both to God and man. Oh! my brethren, have pity on the ignorant, eſpecially the younger ſort, who would learn,

if they had teachers. Ignorance is always a ſecure, inſenſible ſtate. They know nothing, and therefore they fear nothing. Public inſtruction is, in a great meaſure, uſeleſs to thoſe who are not prepared for it by more familiar teaching at home. Let miniſters ſpeak never ſo plainly from the pulpit, it is ſtill to many of them a ſtrange language, which they do not comprehend.

3. From what hath been ſaid on this ſubject, you may ſee the neceſſity of regeneration, or an inward change of heart, in order to real religion. You have heard above, that it is not a ſpeculative knowledge of the nature and perfections of God, or underſtanding what he is, that leads to repentance, but a view of his excellence and amiableneſs, as glorious in his holineſs. This none can have, but thoſe who are in ſome meaſure transformed into the ſame image. Hence it is, that wicked men do not cheriſh, but avoid the thoughts of God. Hence it is, that extraordinary tokens of the divine power and preſence, ſignal judgments, and unexpected ſtrokes on themſelves, or their relations, diſtreſs and terrify them, and bring them under a ſlaviſh bondage for a little, but produce no love; no deſire of union; no cordial ſubmiſſion. Hence alſo appears the fooliſhneſs of that ſinful, but general propenſity in men, to aſk after a ſign, and to deſire that other and different evidence ſhould be given them of the truth of religion than God hath ſeen meet. We have an example of this in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, recorded Luke xvi. towards the cloſe. There the rich man is repreſented, as intreating, that Lazarus might be ſent to his brethren for their warning. When Abraham refers them to the revealed will of God, Moſes and the prophets, he urges his requeſt thus, ver. 30. "And he ſaid, nay, fa-
"ther Abraham; but if one went unto them from the
"dead, they will repent;" to which the anſwer is given immediately, "If they hear not Moſes and the prophets,
"neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the
"dead."

There have been others, at different times, who have deſired ſuch extraordinary proofs; but they would of themſelves, be attended with no real benefit. Though

you had been on Mount Sinai with Moſes, it would have produced terror, but no other effect, without a ſpiritual diſcovery of the real glory of God. See Exod. xix. 16. "And it came to paſs, on the third day, in the morning, "that there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick "cloud upon the Mount, and the voice of the trumpet "exceeding loud; ſo that all the people that *was* in the "camp trembled." And the ſame book, chap. xx. 18, 19. "And all the people ſaw the thunderings, and the light-"nings, and the noiſe of the trumpet, and the mountain "ſmoking; and when the people ſaw it, they removed, "and ſtood afar off: and they ſaid unto Moſes, ſpeak thou "with us, and we will hear; but let not God ſpeak with "us, leſt we die." Another evidence of the ſame thing, may be taken from the caſe of devils and damned ſpirits. They have, no doubt, a ſenſible demonſtration of the being, and, probably, a very clear intellectual knowledge of the nature of God; yet hath it not any effect in changing their diſpoſitions: on the contrary, the more they know of him, who is ſo oppoſite to their temper, they hate him the more; it inflames their natural enmity, and makes it rage with double violence. This, I think, appears very plainly, both from the reaſon of the thing, and from the following paſſages of ſcripture, Matth. viii. 29. it is ſaid of two demoniacs: "And behold they cried "out, ſaying, what have we to do with thee, Jeſus, thou "Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before "the time?" Mark v. 6, 7. "But when he ſaw Jeſus "afar off, he ran and worſhipped him, and cried with a "loud voice, and ſaid, what have I to do with thee, Jeſus, "thou Son of the moſt high God? I adjure thee by God, "that thou torment me not." And again, Mark ix. 20. "And they brought him unto him; and when he ſaw "him, ſtraightway the ſpirit tare him, and he fell on the "ground, and wallowed, foaming." From which paſſages, we may perceive, agreeable to what has been obſerved, that the preſence of Chriſt increaſed, at once, the rage and miſery of the unclean ſpirits. Let this excite us to pray, that it would pleaſe God to reveal himſelf to us by his Spirit, and give us the ſaving knowledge of him,

as he is " in Chriſt Jeſus, reconciling the world to him-
" ſelf."

4. Suffer me, on this occaſion, ſhortly to addreſs myſelf to thoſe, who are ſtrangers to true religion. Let me beſeech them, while they are yet in the way, and whilſt the Spirit of God is ſtriving with them, in his word and ordinances, to lay down the weapons of their rebellion againſt him, and to lay hold, by faith, on the atoning blood of Chriſt for their reconciliation and peace. Are there not ſome in this aſſembly, who have yet no knowledge of God, but that which makes his ſervice a burden, his Sabbaths a wearineſs, and his people contemptible or odious? Are there not ſome tender ſpirits, who are paſſionate lovers of this preſent world, but unable to bear the view of mortality and miſery in their fellow-creatures; who tremble at the gloom of a church-yard, or burying vault, and turn pale as aſhes at the ſight of a death's head, or an open grave? I beſeech you, my beloved hearers, to join, with the terror of divine power, the riches of divine grace; and let both conſtrain you to " acquaint yourſelves with " God, and be at peace, that thereby good may come " unto you." I know no way, by which you may avoid meeting with the king of terrors; but you may ſet him at defiance under the protection of the King of kings. There is no profit in forgetting, but there is both honor and profit in conquering death. Some are unhappily ſucceſsful, for a ſeaſon, in baniſhing every diſmal idea from their minds. The falſe and flattering pleaſures of life ingroſs their attention, and intoxicate their minds. But in a little time, Behold the ſupreme Judge " cometh with clouds, " and every eye ſhall ſee him, and they alſo which pierc-
" ed him; and all kindreds of the earth ſhall wail becauſe
" of him." He is now beſeeching you with tenderneſs, and waiting on you with patience. Embrace, therefore, the happy ſeaſon. " Kiſs the Son, leſt he be angry, and " ye periſh from the way, when his wrath is kindled but " a little; bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him."

5. In the laſt place, you may ſee the reaſon why every truly good man, the more he groweth in religion, the more he groweth in humility. Growth in religion im-

plies, or carries in it, a growing diſcovery of the glory of God, as it ſhines in his works, his word, his ordinances, his providence. This neceſſarily leads to ſelf-abaſement. O how contrary to religion is pride! But, above all others, how abſurd, criminal, intolerable, is ſpiritual pride? What a proof of ſelf-ignorance, as well as forgetfulneſs of God! The firſt views of a penitent are fixed on the enormities of his life; but when theſe are, in ſome meaſure, ſubdued, additional diſcoveries of the glory of God bring forth the latent corruptions of his heart. What affecting complaints does that eminent, zealous, faithful miniſter of Chriſt, the apoſtle Paul, make in the following well known paſſage, Rom. vii. 18. "For I know that in me (that is, "in my fleſh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is pre-"ſent with me; but how to perform that which is good, I "find not." And ver. 23, 24. "But I ſee another law "in my members, warring againſt the law of my mind, "and bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin, which "is in my members. O wretched man that I am! "who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?" Nay, the cleareſt views which a believer can take of the riches of divine mercy through a Redeemer, though they afford unſpeakable conſolation in God, tend alſo deeply to humble him, under a ſenſe of his own unworthineſs. The doctrine of the croſs is not more refreſhing to the broken in heart, than it is abaſing to the proud; for it was choſen of God for this very purpoſe, "that no fleſh ſhould glory "in his preſence."

On the whole, my brethren, as you cannot live under the direction of a better habitual principle, ſo you cannot prepare for any act of ſolemn worſhip more properly, than by deep humility. To improve this diſpoſition, let me intreat you to make a ſerious and impartial ſearch into the ſins you have been guilty of, in heart and converſation, by omiſſion or commiſſion; by neglecting your duty to God, or the ill performance of his worſhip, in public, in family, or in ſecret; by neglecting your duty to your neighbor, to yourſelves, to your relations; or doing that which is wrong, by indulging, in any meaſure, the "luſt "of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, or the pride of life."

To conclude all, you will never have a more satisfying evidence, that your acts of worship, ordinary or more solemn, have been acceptable to God, than if they serve to clothe you with humility, and make you adopt and relish the words of Job in the text: *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

THE HAPPINESS OF THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

A

SERMON.

REV. vii. 15.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.—

MY brethren, however great a degree of corruption prevails at present in the visible church, the very profession of every Christian, implies a renunciation of the world, and a fixed hope of a better state. His attendance upon the ordinances of God on earth, is in order to secure the possession, and prepare himself for the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance. He confesseth that he is a stranger and pilgrim in the earth; that he lives by faith, and not by sight. And, therefore, nothing can be more suitable to his character; nothing more conducive to his comfort, than frequent views of the employment and happiness of the spirits of just men made perfect.

And, surely, this is a subject highly proper for our meditation on the evening of a communion Sabbath. In this ordinance, you have had the price paid for this glorious inheritance set before you, by symbolical representation, that your faith in, and hope of the possession of it, might be the more confirmed. In the institution itself, as recorded by the apostle Paul, you find he connects the commemoration of the sufferings, and death of Christ, with his second appearance in glory, 1 Cor. xi. 26. "For, as often as ye

"eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the "Lord's death till he come." Nay, our Lord himſelf ſeems to have had his heart and his thoughts in heaven, when he left this memorial of his preſence on earth, as appears from Matth. xxvi. 29. "But I ſay unto you, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, un- "til that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's "kingdom." And, indeed, we have his own example in this firſt communion, wherein he himſelf was the adminiſtrator, for following or concluding it with a meditation on the heavenly happineſs; for, before he roſe from it, he begins his excellent conſolatory diſcourſe in this manner, John xiv. 1, 2. "Let not your heart be troubled; "ye believe in God, believe alſo in me. In my Father's "houſe are many manſions; if it were not ſo, I would "have told you: I go to prepare a place for you."

It is true, indeed, my brethren, our knowledge of the future glory of the ſaints, is at preſent, extremely imperfect, and muſt be ſo, for wiſe reaſons, while we continue in the body. There are, however, ſeveral different views of it given in the word of God, highly worthy of our attention. Amongſt others, this in our text, that they are *before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.* That theſe words are to be underſtood of the ſaints in heaven, and not of any glorious period of the church on earth, or, if of this laſt, manifeſtly in alluſion to the former, I think is plain, both from what goes before, and what follows them; which I ſhall read in connection, as all the explication of the text that is neceſſary, from ver. 13. "And one of the elders anſwered, ſaying "unto me, what are theſe which are arrayed in white "robes? and whence came they? and I ſaid unto him, "Sir, thou knoweſt. And he ſaid to me, theſe are they "which came out of great tribulation, and have waſhed "their robes, and made them white in the blood of the "Lamb." *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple;* "and he that "ſitteth on the throne ſhall dwell among them; they "ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more; neither "ſhall the ſun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb,

" which is in the midſt of the throne, ſhall feed them, and " ſhall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and " God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

What I propoſe from this paſſage, at preſent, is, through divine aſſiſtance, to illuſtrate a little to you, the happineſs of the ſaints in perpetual communion with God in his temple above; and then to make ſome improvement of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction while you continue here below.

I. In the firſt place, then, I am to illuſtrate a little to you the happineſs of the ſaints in perpetual communion with God in his temple above. And, here, obſerve, that though I have ſaid perpetual communion with God, and did mean it of his immediate worſhip and ſervice, I did not intend to aſſert, that they are at no time employed in a different manner, or in work which may be called by a different name. What variety of exerciſe may be provided for their noble and vigorous faculties, in the nature or works of God, we cannot pretend to know. As the angels are called " miniſtring ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter " to them who are heirs of ſalvation;" ſo we know not how far he may bleſs and dignify his ſaints, by employing them in the adminiſtration of ſome part of his extenſive dominion. But it is ſurely juſt to call their communion with God in his worſhip perpetual, both becauſe of their frequent actual application to it, and becauſe of that conſtant adoration of ſoul which we muſt ſuppoſe will accompany either an inveſtigation of the nature and works, or an execution of the will of God. It is alſo well warranted by the expreſſion in the text, *and ſerve him day and night in his temple.* Now, in order to illuſtrate the worſhip of the ſaints in heaven, we may conſider it in two different lights: Firſt, As it is *internal and ſpiritual.* Secondly, As it is *external and ſenſible.*

Firſt, Let us conſider the happineſs of the ſaints, in that part of their celeſtial worſhip, which is internal and ſpiritual; and, in general, we muſt frequently recal to our minds the imperfection of our preſent diſcoveries, and remember, that " eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor

" hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what " the Lord hath laid up for them that love him." There may, for any thing we know, be diſcoveries, and by conſequence, acts of worſhip, and diſpoſitions of mind correſponding to them, totally different in kind from any thing we are now capable of, as well as higher in degree. Of theſe we muſt be abſolutely ſilent: therefore, all that ſhall follow upon this ſubject, is founded upon the following remark, that whatever acts of worſhip we have now any experience of, and by which we are initiated, ſo to ſpeak, into, and trained up for the employment of heaven, ſhall then be performed to far greater perfection, and with infinitely greater joy.

In order to the more diſtinct conſideration of this ſubject, you may obſerve, that all the acts of worſhip, of which we are now capable, may be reduced to the four following kinds: Firſt, Acts of adoration. Secondly, Of gratitude. Thirdly, Of deſire. And, Fourthly, Of truſt and ſubjection.

In the firſt place, Acts of adoration. By theſe, as diſtinguiſhed from the others mentioned, I underſtand the immediate contemplation of the glorious excellence of the divine nature, and the exerciſe of theſe affections of ſoul which correſpond to it. The nature of God is diſcovered, and his glory exhibited to view, in all his works, and in all his ways. And he is the proper object of the higheſt eſteem, the deepeſt admiration, and moſt ardent love of every reaſonable creature, for what he is in himſelf, independent of any intereſt they may have, or hope to have in his favor. Therefore it is the firſt duty and chief end of man to give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto his name. I know this is what worldly men, who live in ſin, cannot underſtand, and therefore are apt to deride; which is indeed the caſe with reſpect to all the truths of God, conſidered in their full extent, and as reſting upon their proper foundation; the natural man cannot receive them. But as it is the firſt commandment of the law. " Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only " ſhalt thou ſerve;" ſo it is the leading and the capital truth taught and repeated in the ſacred oracles, that all

things were made for, that all things ſhall finally tend to; and therefore all intelligent creatures ought, ſupremely, to aim at the glory of God.

This may be eaſily ſupported by unprejudiced reaſon; for what can be more juſt than to have the higheſt eſteem of the higheſt excellence, the deepeſt admiration of boundleſs and ſpotleſs perfection, and a ſupreme love for what is infinitely amiable. It is wholly owing to the corruption of our nature, that we are ſo little ſenſible of the ſin of neglecting this. And, indeed, a ſhort and juſt deſcription of our corruption may be given thus; it conſiſts in dethroning God, and ſetting up ſelf to be honored, loved, and ſerved in his room.

But, my brethren, every real Chriſtian has been recovered to a view of this his firſt obligation as a creature; knows, experimentally, what it is, ſupremely, to honor the living and true God, and hath a peculiar pleaſure in the ſurvey and celebration of all his perfections. All ſuch rejoice in his dominion, and feel a ſatisfaction in it, as infinitely right and fit, that the will of the Lord ſhould be done. They join, in their manner, on earth, with the heavenly hoſts, as thus repreſented, Rev. xi. 16, 17. "And the four and twenty elders, which ſat before God "on their ſeats, fell upon their faces, and worſhipped "God, ſaying, we give thee thanks, O Lord God Al-"mighty, which art, and waſt, and art to come, becauſe "thou haſt taken to thee thy great power, and haſt reign-"ed." Revelation xix. 6. "And I heard, as it were, "the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of "many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, "ſaying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reign-"eth." But how incomparably more perfect, and more joyful, their adoration of God, when they are come into his preſence! then the veil ſhall be drawn aſide: they ſhall "ſee him face to face;" they ſhall "know, even as they "are known." Inſtead of theſe comparatively obſcure hints and intimations, which they now have of his glory, then, the whole extenſive plan of providence, of which they now ſee only a ſmall detached part, ſhall be opened to their view: then ſhall they ſee the overthrow and ſubjection of the pride and arrogance, and boaſted wiſdom of

man, " which is fooliſhneſs with God;" and the bleſſed, happy iſſue, of theſe various trials of the people of God, which formerly gave them ſo many anxious and diſtruſtful thoughts. But why do I mention particulars, when all the effects of creating ſkill, all the fruits of ſupporting and preſerving goodneſs, ſhall be laid before them?

And is there not ſome lover of Chriſt, ſaying here within himſelf, why do you not mention the myſtery of redemption, " God manifeſted in the fleſh:" in this the glory of God eminently ſhines, his unequalled, his unrivalled glory. That this, as the work of God, (though we can hardly keep our own concerns out of view) ſhall be the particular theme of celeſtial praiſe, is not to be doubted, and is evident from hence, that Chriſt, as the object of worſhip, is repreſented, as appearing there like a Lamb that had been ſlain.

Once more, as the church of God, at preſent, is the mean of illuſtrating his wiſdom to principalities and powers, or to the angelic hoſts, which we learn from Eph. iii. 10. " To the intent that, now, unto the principalities and " powers, in heavenly places, might be known by the " church the manifold wiſdom of God;" ſo the order and government of theſe ſuperior intelligences ſhall be opened to the view of the ſaints in glory. In the proſpect of all this, they ſhall ſay, Rev. xv. 3. "—Great and marvellous " are thy works, Lord God Almighty; juſt and true are " thy ways, thou King of ſaints." With what exultation of ſoul, then, with what fervor of adoring wonder, and admiring love, ſhall they celebrate the divine glory! As they ſhall be wholly freed from every degree of ſinful and ſelfiſh bias, they ſhall feel the cleareſt conviction of the obligation of their duty, and diſcharge it by a free, unconſtrained impulſe of ſoul: for the ſame reaſon, the pleaſure ariſing from it will be ſo much the more pure and unmixed, that it is not aimed at on its own account, nor purchaſed by any compliance that might but ſeem to have a mercenary view.

In the ſecond place, Let us conſider the celeſtial worſhip, as conſiſting in acts of gratitude and praiſe. And, here obſerve, that though I have conſidered the diſinter-

eſted love of God, and the humble adoration of his own matchleſs inherent excellence, as firſt both in order and dignity, which it ought to be, this does not take away, or ſupercede acts of thankſgiving, but rather lays the juſteſt and nobleſt foundation for their exerciſe; becauſe it ſubjects the creature to the Creator; keeps its dependence and obedience continually in view, and greatly inhances the favors beſtowed by ſuch a hand, and upon ſuch objects. Gratitude for the goodneſs of God, is what, ſurely, we may have ſome conception of, even in this ſtate, in which he loads us with his benefits, and in which every moment of our continuance is a proof and evidence of his patience and forbearance. The ſaints eſpecially, who have learned not only to diſcern and confeſs the hand that ſuſtains them, but to acknowledge God, as the God of their ſalvation, muſt underſtand what it is to praiſe him for his mercies.

But how much louder muſt the voice of praiſe be in heaven than in earth? The mercies for which they give praiſe are incomparably greater; ſo is alſo the uniformity and ſecurity of their poſſeſſion. What is the richeſt and moſt gorgeous attire, the moſt ſumptuous and delicate fare, which this world can afford, compared with thoſe rivers of pleaſures which are at God's right hand? How imperfect are all the enjoyments of this ſtate, by reaſon of the ſufferings and ſorrows that are mingled with them? We are apt to envy one another through ignorance; but the man liveth not on earth, who hath not ſome ſorrows to allay his proſperity, except, perhaps, for a few moments, when the mind is ingroſſed, and, as it were, intoxicated with ſome late acquiſition. Our preſent character is ſuch as doth not admit of perfect happineſs. Here muſt be the fire of affliction to purge away the droſs of ſin. But, in the world to come, the happineſs of the ſaints is perfect and unmixed, for the people ſhall be all righteous. So it is ſaid, in the words immediately following the text; "They ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more, "neither ſhall the ſun light on them, nor any heat. And, "Rev. xxi. 3, 4. And I heard a great voice out of hea- "ven, ſaying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, "and he will dwell with them, and they ſhall be his peo-

" ple, and God himſelf ſhall be with them, and be their " God: and God ſhall wipe away all tears from their " eyes; and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, " nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain; for " the former things are paſſed away." The precarioufneſs of our preſent enjoyments greatly diminiſhes their value; they are very uncertain in their own nature, and our continuance with them is equally ſo. But, in heaven, there ſhall be no more death, the inhabitants ſhall go no more out: and their enjoyments ſhall be ſuch as can neither waſte nor change. How animated, then, muſt be the praiſes of the higher houſe, eſpecially when the reflection upon the wretchedneſs and precarioufneſs of their paſt ſtate muſt ſo greatly improve their ſenſe of the riches and ſecurity of the preſent? Let me ſuppoſe a caſe, which, indeed, happens every day, though the effect of it is not fully diſcernable by us; ſuppoſe a poor Chriſtian, perhaps, poor in this world, but certainly poor in ſpirit, who hath long ſtruggled with the evils of life, who hath patiently endured the inſulting language, and diſdainful eye, of the proud and proſperous, nay, which is far worſe, hath been diſtreſſed with many anxious fears concerning his own future ſtate; ſuch an one, taken from the world, how amazing, how bleſſed the change! from an earthly cottage, to a throne of glory; from a deſpiſing world, to an approving God; from a frail, diſeaſed, dying body, to everlaſting ſtrength, and undecaying beauty! how muſt his mouth be filled with praiſes, when the days of his mourning are for ever ended?

But that which eſpecially ſerves to enliven the praiſes of the ſaints in heaven is, their ſenſe of their own unworthineſs as ſinners: this it is which makes all the gifts of God of ſeven-fold value, they are all of free unmerited grace and mercy. Redemption! Redemption is the theme of the praiſes of heaven, Rev. i. 5. " Unto him " that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood. " Rev. v. 9. And they ſung a new ſong, ſaying thou art " worthy to take the book, and to open the ſeals thereof: " for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by " thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people,

"and nation." Redemption is at preſent careleſsly ſought after, and coldly acknowledged; but then ſhall they know the guilt they have contracted, the hell they have eſcaped, the glory which they poſſeſs, and the price at which it was bought. Oh, my brethren! how light a ſenſe of the evil of ſin has the moſt humbled penitent now, compared to what he ſhall have in heaven! how light a ſenſe of the miſery of the impenitent, compared to what he ſhall have after he has heard their ſentence pronounced by the judge, and ſeen them go away into everlaſting puniſhment! how ſmall a value does he put upon the gift of God, eternal life, till he taſte of it! and how weak is his love to God in Chriſt, whilſt it is only kindled by faith, compared to what it ſhall be, when he ſees the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world!

In the third place, Let us conſider the celeſtial worſhip, as conſiſting in acts of deſire. There is much of this in the diſpoſition of the people of God on earth, they ſay with the prophet Iſaiah, ch. xxvi. 8. "The deſire of our ſoul "is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." And as every agreeable object is the more deſired, the more it is known; ſo the clear diſcovery that is made in heaven, of the glory and excellence of God, and the delightful communications of his love, muſt ſtill increaſe our deſire of further and further degrees of it; and there is a fulneſs, both in the divine nature and benignity, that can never be exhauſted: Earthly things, indeed, to which we often, through ignorance, affix an erroneous and exceſſive value, the more they are known, are often the leſs eſteemed; but this can never take place where the object cannot be eſteemed in proportion to its worth, becauſe its worth can never be completely diſcovered. Perhaps it may be thought improper to include deſire among the acts of celeſtial worſhip, as there the happy ſouls ſhall be ſo fully gratified, in every holy inclination, as to leave no room for any further demand. But we muſt conſider that there ſhall be room for an everlaſting progreſſive improvement to every finite creature; and the gradual enlargement of their capacity ſhall make way for theſe further communications of divine love.

There ſhall, indeed, be no ſuch deſire, as implies any anxious or impatient craving. This is ordinarily produced by doubt, or difficulty of ſupply, which can have no place here; but their may, nevertheleſs, be ſuch deſire as leads to, and prepares for, the continuance or increaſe of enjoyment. It is natural indeed for us, from our preſent experience, to conceive, that deſire muſt weaken or leſſen with poſſeſſion, as it is chiefly kept up by variety and novelty, a love of which ſeems to be ſo eſſential to, and powerful in the human nature. To remove this apprehenſion, I obſerve theſe two things, Firſt, That in the infinity of the divine perfections, and works, there is ſufficient diverſity to employ and gratify a finite creature, through all eternity; ſo that if it pleaſe God to continue, after the reſurrection, a love of novelty, or any diſpoſition ſimilar to it, he is well able to provide it with proper exerciſe.

But, ſecondly, It appears highly probable, that the love of change, ſo obſervable in human nature, is more owing to the vanity of created enjoyments, than any thing eſſential to us, as rational ſpirits; and, therefore, when we enjoy the ſubſtance inſtead of the ſhadow, the Creator inſtead of the creature, the cauſe being gone, the effect will ceaſe of courſe. And, to confirm this, we may obſerve, that novelty is not an eſſential qualification of what pleaſes us; for habit often creates as ſtrong or ſtronger attachment to what we have long known, than the charms of novelty to what is untried: enjoyment therefore may, in ſome caſes, excite deſire. And if this is the caſe, ſometimes, on earth, there is all reaſon to think it will be always ſo in heaven. May I not juſt add, that we find, from our preſent imperfect experience, that a life of hope and activity, when there is ſuitable encouragement and ſucceſs, from time to time, is the moſt agreeable of any that can be conceived. How delightful then muſt be both the habitual and actual deſires of the ſaints in glory, pointed at the worthieſt objects, and not only aſſured of, but conſtantly rewarded with, complete ſatisfaction!

In the fourth and laſt place, Let us conſider the celeſtial worſhip, as conſiſting in acts of truſt and ſubjection. I

join them together, becauſe they are very much involved in, and founded upon one another. And I have mentioned them laſt, becauſe the iſſue of every ſerious exerciſe of a believer's ſoul, of every act of communion with God, is ordinarily his being brought to a compoſed truſt, complacency, and acquieſcence in God, as his ſatisfying portion; and a conſecration of himſelf and his all to God in obedience and ſubmiſſion. And how infinitely more complete, as well as joyful, muſt the truſt and ſubmiſſion of the ſaints be in heaven than on earth! If even here they ſay, "Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him. It is "the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good;" how much more reaſon have they to put an unſhaken truſt in God, when they have taſted the fruits of his love, and received the proof of his faithfulneſs, in the actual poſſeſſion of his promiſes? as the Pſalmiſt ſays, Pſal. ix. 10. "They "that know thy name will put their truſt in thee."

Thus clear diſcoveries of God's nature, and extenſive views of his works and ways, muſt eſtabliſh them in a chearful dependance on his unchangeable truth. And, O, with what a readineſs, or rather with what pleaſure and alacrity, will they reſign themſelves to his will, and conſecrate themſelves to his ſervice! There will then be no remains of the carnal mind to refuſe obedience, or of an impatient murmuring ſpirit, to complain under the yoke; but they will be as the angels, his miniſters to do his pleaſure, ready at his call, and earneſtly coveting employment. Obedience will be their prevailing inclination, and the formal expreſſion, and tender of it, to their God and Redeemer, will be a part of their actual ſervice.

And, now, to conclude this head, you may obſerve, that I could not avoid, in illuſtrating the worſhip of the ſaints in heaven, frequently to bring in view their habitual frame and conſtant employment; but I hope this is not altogether improper; for there is not, by far, ſo great a difference between their acts of worſhip, and their ordinary work, as between ours on earth. They run into one another, are very much of a ſimilar nature; they are ſhadowed forth, but very faintly, in the ſtate of that man on earth, who walks with God all the day long. As his

life is a conſtant courſe, either of vocal or mental worſhip, ſo, in a higher degree, they are *before the throne of God, and ſerve him day and night in his temple.*

Let us, now, in the ſecond place, conſider the worſhip of the ſaints in heaven, as it is external and ſenſible. That there is ſomething even external and ſenſible in it, neceſſarily follows from the reſurrection of the body, which is ſo important a part of the Chriſtian doctrine: for though the bodies with which the ſaints ſhall be clothed at the reſurrection, ſhall exceedingly differ from their groſs bodies, in ſplendor and beauty, and, particulary, ſhall ſo far excel them in purity, as to be termed by the apoſtle Paul 1 Cor. xv. 44. "Spiritual bodies;" yet, if they be body or matter at all, they muſt be limited to ſome place, and have an external and ſenſible form. The ſame thing appears from that beautiful paſſage in the book of Job, ch. xix. 25. "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that "he ſhall ſtand at the latter day upon the earth."

Further, though we are, no doubt, taught, in ſcripture, to conſider heaven more as a nature than a place, yet there is evident foundation, from ſeveral expreſſions, to ſuppoſe that there is ſome portion of the works of God ſet apart for that purpoſe, and adorned with ſuch a viſible glory, as is proper to affect the imaginations of created beings. Thus there is mention made of the third heaven, the higheſt heaven, the heaven of heavens. See alſo Rev. xxi. 1, 2. "And I ſaw a new heaven, and a new earth; for the firſt "heaven and the firſt earth were paſſed away; and there "was no more ſea; and I John ſaw the holy city, new "Jeruſalem, coming down from God out of heaven, pre-"pared as a bride adorned for her huſband." And, from the 19th verſe of that chapter to the end, it is deſcribed in ſuch terms, as naturally ſuggeſt to us the greateſt glory and magnificence.

This is the temple of God in which his ſervants ſhall ſerve him, in which we may ſuppoſe the general aſſembly of the church of the firſt born meet together, for the joint celebration of their Creator and Redeemer's praiſe. But as to a more particular account, either of the place or

manner of the worſhip there performed, it were more eaſy to form amuſing and curious ſpeculations, than to fix upon any thing ſolid and certain. In this, as indeed in every other part of the heavenly ſtate and employment, comparative reflections are moſt to be depended on. And ſurely, if in this lower world, and that part of the creation, which is at preſent, ſubjected to our view, there is ſo much order and beauty, ſo much ſplendor and magnificence, though it be the abode of guilty creatures, under manifeſt tokens of divine diſpleaſure, what muſt be the unclouded luſtre, and perfect beauty, of that place where the glory of almighty God is peculiarly diſplayed, and which was prepared for the reception of the objects of his ſpecial love, before the foundation of the world? If the ſeveral ſenſes, with which we are now endued, are capable of affording us ſo exquiſite a pleaſure in their preſent gratification, notwithſtanding their apparent diſorder, how high and raviſhing a delight may they communicate when they are refined and purified, furniſhed with their proper objects, and freed from that inſatiableneſs, and tendency to exceſs, which is the fruit of ſin, the evidence of a corrupted frame, and, as a mixture of gall, poiſons every worldly joy? It is worth obſervation, upon this ſubject, that the happineſs of the ſaints is many times deſcribed in ſcripture, by their external circumſtances and poſition, ſo to ſpeak, and by ſenſible gratifications; as by ſitting upon thrones, at the right hand of God; by a city highly adorned; by a river of water of life; a tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits. And his ſervice is deſcribed by the melody of ſongs of praiſe, and even by inſtrumental muſic, Rev. xv. 2. where mention is made of the harps of God. Now, though God forbid that we ſhould underſtand theſe expreſſions in ſuch a manner, as to ſuppoſe that the enjoyments of the ſaints above have any thing in them reſembling the groſsneſs of preſent ſenſual indulgence, yet we may, with ſafety, conclude, that as the body ſhall then join in the ſervice of God, it ſhall be inſtrumental in perceiving the pleaſure of it; and that a ſenſe and perception of the beauty and grandeur of that temple of the living God, in which they offer up their celeſtial ſacrifices, ſhall increaſe and

enliven their gratitude to, and adoration of him, who raiſed the glorious fabric.

But the external circumſtance, which, in my apprehenſion, will contribute moſt to the delight and happineſs of the ſaints, in their heavenly worſhip, will be their union and ſociety in it. Man is evidently framed for deriving his chief happineſs in this ſtate from ſociety. It never was, and never will be good for man to live alone. Social worſhip is peculiarly acceptable to God, as might be ſhewn from many paſſages of ſcripture, Math. xviii. 19, 20. "Again, I ſay unto you, that if two of you ſhall agree "on earth, as touching any thing that they ſhall aſk, it "ſhall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. "For where two or three are gathered together in my "name, there am I in the midſt of them." Pſal. lxxxvii. 2. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than "all the dwellings of Jacob." And doth not the experience of every one of thoſe who love the habitation of God's houſe, and the place where his honor dwelleth, teſtify what an elevation of ſoul, and enlargement of heart, they obtain by mingling their voices in his praiſe? As united fires brighten each others blaze, as many concordant ſounds make the finer harmony, ſo the union of many hearts, in divine worſhip, makes the higher ſpiritual melody, not only more grateful to God, but more delightful to themſelves. The pleaſure of this is, indeed, greatly allayed on earth, by a mixture of diſcordant notes (to continue the former alluſion) of enemies with friends. But allow me to make a ſuppoſition, that all within theſe walls, this evening, were perfectly upright with God, and that our mutual ſincerity were perfectly known to each other, what inexpreſſible fervency, and rapture of ſpirit, would it give to every one, in ſinging the praiſes of God, and of the Lamb, to conſider himſelf as joined with ſuch a number of pure, holy, bleſſed, redeemed ſouls? But how much beyond conception will this be increaſed, when we meet with the innumerable company of the redeemed above, and all our pious fathers, who, many ages before this, ſerved our common Maſter; many, we hope, who kept holy days, in this very place, and whoſe bodies now

ſleep in the duſt under our feet, and around us; nay, when all, from the eaſt and from the weſt, ſhall be completely gathered in, when every heart ſhall agree with every tongue, and ſalvation to the Lamb ſhall be the univerſal, delightful, repeated, acclamation? There are two paſſages of ſcripture which ſpeak of the multitude, and employment of this glorious company, which ought never to be read without a holy and delightful reverence. Rev. v. 9, 15. "And "they ſung a new ſong, ſaying, thou art worthy to take "the book, and to open the ſeals thereof: for thou waſt "ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; "and the four beaſts ſaid Amen. And the four and twen- "ty elders fell down, and worſhipped him that liveth for "ever and ever." Rev. vii. 9, 12. "After this, I beheld, "and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, "ſtood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed "with white robes, and palms in their hands; ſaying, "Amen, bleſſing, and glory, and wiſdom, and thankſgiv- "ing, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God, "forever and ever, Amen."

I proceed, now, to conclude the ſubject, by ſome practical improvement of what has been ſaid. And can we refuſe to begin, by praiſing God for his unſpeakable love, and matchleſs condeſcenſion? The whole work of our redemption is wonderful; but, in a particular manner, the concluſion of it: that we ſhould not only have our clothes waſhed in the blood of the Lamb, but ſhould be *before the throne of God, and ſerve him day and night in his temple.* At the dedication of the temple of Solomon, that wiſe and pious prince breaks out into an expreſſion of holy admiration and aſtoniſhment, and ſays, 2 Chron. vi. 18. "But will God in very deed dwell with men on "the earth? Behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens "cannot contain thee; how much leſs this houſe which I "have built?" How much greater reaſon have we to ſay, when recollecting our guilt and unworthineſs, "and "ſhall men in very deed dwell with God in heaven?"

how amazing the diſtance! how glorious the dwelling and employment! and how mean the invited gueſts! Let us take confuſion of face to ourſelves, and acknowledge, that this cannot be accounted for, but by the propitiation and purchaſe of the eternal Son of God, as the only foundation of our hope. Let us, in the view of every privilege, renew the exerciſe of faith in him, as giving us a title to it; and, on this occaſion, particularly, beg of him to lead us, by his Spirit, through all the neceſſary ſteps of previous preparation, and at laſt receive us into his glory.

In the ſecond place, from what has been ſaid, you may ſee the importance and benefit of the worſhip and ſervice of God on earth. If this ſtate is a ſtate of trial and preparation for that which is to follow it, and the worſhip of God is ſo great a part of the employment, and ſo great a ſource of the happineſs of the ſaints above, it is plain, that his worſhip on earth muſt be of the higheſt uſefulneſs. It is not only an unqueſtionable duty, but it is manifeſtly neceſſary to fit us for, and habituate us to the heavenly exerciſe. It is plain from the whole analogy of providence, that a preparation of nature is neceſſary for the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of any ſtate. We ſee, even in natural things, that ſowing, and a long time of gradual nouriſhment, is neceſſary to the ſtrength and conſiſtency of any plant or tree; and that, according to the ſeed, ſo is the production. This the apoſtle very ſtrongly applies, Gal. vi. 7. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for "whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap." Theſe that expect to ſerve God in his temple above, muſt be habituated to ſerve him in his church on earth. This is the ſeed-time; then is the harveſt. The houſe of God is the place both of the birth and nouriſhment of his people, Pſal. lxxxvii. 5. "And of Zion it ſhall be ſaid, this and "that man was born in her; and the higheſt himſelf ſhall "eſtabliſh her."

Therefore ſuffer me, my brethren, to reprove the ſin, and ſhow the danger of thoſe, who altogether neglect and deſpiſe the worſhip of God. If chance, imitation, curioſity, or a worſe motive, has brought to this audience, any

who are habitual deſpiſers of the worſhip of God, I hereby aſſure them, in his name, that, unleſs they change their heart and practice, in heaven they ſhall never dwell, becauſe its employment they do not love. It is both the evidence and cauſe of the degeneracy of many in this age, that they have fallen into a neglect and contempt of the public worſhip of God; that, in their notions of religion, when they form any at all, they, in a great meaſure, leave out their duty to their Maker, and confine it only to a few of the ordinary offices due from one man to another. Experience, indeed, plainly ſhows the weakneſs and feebleneſs of theſe virtues that are not enlivened and animated by piety towards God; and that it is as poſſible to uphold the ſuperſtructure, by taking away the foundation, to preſerve the vigor and verdure of the branches of a tree, by ſeparating them from the root, as to preſerve and ſecure any regularity of conduct, without a principle of divine life, of vital, ſpiritual union with God through Chriſt; but what, in a particular manner, ſhows the folly of all ſuch, is their relation to eternity. Suppoſing their practice were every way fit and proper for this world, how does it agree with the employment of heaven? Doth not conſcience tell you, that you have neither right nor reliſh, nor even capacity for it, and, by neceſſary conſequence, are under a ſentence of condemnation, "chil-"dren of wrath, and heirs of hell?" for there is no middle ſtate. I beſeech you therefore, nay, obteſt you, in the moſt ſolemn manner, that you henceforth honor God in his houſe and ordinances, if you expect that ever he ſhould honor you: and, remember, that this warning, which you have received by the wiſe diſpoſal of his providence, will be an aggravation of your guilt, if you neglect and deſpiſe it.

I cannot help, alſo, upon this occaſion, putting you in mind of the neglected duty of worſhipping God in your families. Theſe ſmaller ſocieties, in which the members are connected by the ſtrongeſt ties, and ſtand in the neareſt and moſt endearing relations to one another, how proper are they for the joint worſhip of God? and how great is the ſin of neglecting it? How can you expect any thing

elſe, but either an angry providence, or hardening and ſtupifying proſperity, which is infinitely worſe, unleſs you call on the name of God? whereas, by mingling your voices in his praiſes on earth, you prepare yourſelves for his ſervice in heaven. I cannot go through all the excuſes offered for this neglect; but wo ſhall be to that man, who is too buſy, too proud, or too modeſt, to worſhip, in his family, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who made him by his power, and upholds him by his providence.

In the third place, Let me improve this ſubject for the trial of thoſe whoſe ſtate is more doubtful. However many open enemies there are to religion in theſe days, it is to be lamented, that there are many alſo, who continue their attendance upon the ordinances of God, but in a cold and formal manner, and reſting upon the form, without the power, lay themſelves aſleep in ſecurity. Bring yourſelves to the teſt, then, and ſuffer conſcience to diſcover the truth, however painful and mortifying. Is there any of you, who has heard of the employment of the ſaints above, as conſiſting in the ſervice of God, who are not able to conceive the happineſs or delight of ſuch work? Is there any among you, who weary of the ſervice of God, not from weakneſs of body, but from averſion of mind, who, immediately after, return to the world, and its enjoyments, with eagerneſs, and lightneſs of mind, like a bullock, when he is looſed from the yoke? Such have good reaſon to ſuſpect their condition, and to fear, that they are unrenewed in heart. But, I hope, there are not a few, who, from their heart, call the Sabbath, "a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honorable; "who eſteem a day in God's courts better than a thou-"ſand;" whoſe higheſt joy it is, to have their hearts captivated with his love, and their affections enlarged in his praiſe; and whoſe indiſpoſition often to this work, by ſloth or worldlineſs of mind, is their greateſt grief. Such, my brethren, have good reaſon to look forward to that happy time, when they ſhall ſerve him with unwearied vigor and alacrity; and ſhall behold the ſmile of his countenance without one mortifying frown.

In the fourth place, I would improve this ſubject for the conſolation of the afflicted. The hope of glory is the true and proper ſource of conſolation; whether your ſorrow ariſes from ſuffering, or from ſin; for both theſe ſhall be perfect ſtrangers to the happy abode of the ſaints above. If you are under the anxiety of worldly care, the oppreſſion and reproach of the ungodly, the attacks of ſickneſs, the gradual looſening of the pins of this feeble tottering frame; if theſe weaken the ſtrength, and mar the melody of your preſent ſongs, and compel you to mix your praiſes with groans, remember, that, in a ſhort time, theſe complaints will be at an end, the harps of God will be given you, and ſkill to handle them. If a ſenſe of inherent corruption, if grief for an abſent or an angry God, make your hands to hang down, exert the hope of being made not only perfectly happy, but perfectly holy, and ſerving him day and night in his temple.

This leads me, in the laſt place, To direct you, to improve this ſubject for animating your preſent devotion. Nothing is more proper for this purpoſe, than the lively hope, or rather anticipation of the heavenly employment. Let us overcome our preſent ſloth, by entering, in faith and hope, within the vail, and conſidering how we ſhall then praiſe him: then there ſhall be no wandering thought, no cold heart, no faultering tongue, no flagging ſpirits. And, as without all queſtion, ſome are here preſent, not a few, I would charitably hope, who ſhall enter into that temple of the living God; ſo we know not how ſoon any of us may be ſent for, to leave this worldly ſanctuary, to be above the uſe of preſent ordinances, and to join the innumerable company about the throne. In the proſpect of this, Pſal. cxlix. 1, 2. "—Let us ſing unto the Lord a "new ſong, and his praiſe in the congregation of ſaints. "Let Iſrael rejoice in him that made him; let the chil-"dren of Zion be joyful in their King." Amen.

MINISTERIAL FIDELITY IN DECLARING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

A

SERMON.

A Farewell Diſcourſe, delivered at Paiſley, May, 1768.

ACTS, XX. 26, 27.

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not ſhunned to declare unto you all the counſel of God.

MY BRETHREN,

THESE words are a part of the apoſtle Paul's diſcourſe to the elders of Epheſus, when taking leave of them, under a firm perſuaſion, or rather a certain knowledge, that he would never again ſee them in the body. My preſent ſituation, of which none of you is ignorant, has determined me to the choice of this paſſage, as a very proper ſubject, from which I may conclude the exerciſe of my miniſtry among you. I had once occaſion, on leaving another charge, to have taken a formal farewel of a very affectionate people, but had not courage to attempt it. The circumſtances attending the removal, which, if Providence prevent not, ſeems now to be at hand, are ſuch as do not leſſen, but greatly increaſe the difficulty of ſpeaking from ſuch a ſubject. And yet, in another view, they

ſeemed to urge it ſo ſtrongly, and to preſent ſuch an opportunity of being uſeful, as I durſt not wholly decline. Every Chriſtian ought to be an obſerver of providence. Nothing will more effectually promote his holineſs and comfort. And both a miniſter and his people ought to improve the aſpect of providence, when it hath any thing peculiar in it, to their mutual benefit.

Let me therefore, intreat you to attend to the following diſcourſe, with patience and compoſure. This requeſt I the rather hope you will comply with, as there is nothing intended that is perſonal, further than muſt neceſſarily ariſe from the ſubject itſelf, or be unavoidably ſuggeſted by your own thoughts. I bleſs God that I have no complaint to make of want of duty, or affection upon your ſide; neither is it any part of my purpoſe to juſtify my own conduct, during the time that I have had the honor and happineſs of being intruſted with the miniſtry of the goſpel in this place. I ſhall therefore only ſay, that whether I have been able to deliver my own ſoul, by fidelity in duty, and by purity of principle, I am certain, that very much has been laid to the charge of many of yours. Leaſt of all do I intend to endeavor to ſatisfy you of the motives which have induced me to accept of a call to a diſtant part of the world, and, in ſome degree, a different employment in the church of Chriſt. For this, I know that an account muſt be given, in due time, to a much greater Judge, with whoſe approbation either the applauſe or cenſure of men are not worthy to be laid in the balance. The ſingle purpoſe, therefore, of the following diſcourſe, ſhall be to give you ſuch a comprehenſive view of the truths of the everlaſting goſpel,—of the importance and difficulty of a miniſter's work; as may direct you in the choice of another paſtor,—increaſe your eſteem of ſuch as are faithful,—and excite you to guard againſt every thing that may either diſcourage them in their work, or prevent their ſucceſs.

The apoſtle Paul had planted the church of Epheſus, and he had ſpent a part of his time there, very conſiderable, if we conſider the extent of his commiſſion, and his many apoſtolic journies to different parts of the world. In the

whole of his discourse, to the elders of that church, whom he had sent for in his passage to Rome, we see the greatest tenderness and affection, and an earnest concern, to engrave upon their hearts the truths which he had taught them while residing there. And, in the words of the text, you see the foundation on which he takes them to record, that he was *free from the blood of all men; for*, says he, *I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* I omit every thing that might be occasionally introduced from the text, or context, such as ministers being chargeable with the blood of those who perish by their neglect, and the doctrine of the gospel being the counsel of God, that I may fix your attention, where certainly the emphasis of this declaration lies, viz. That he had declared to them *all the counsel of God*, and that he had not *shunned* to do so, or that he had not been deterred, by any difficulties, from the faithful discharge of his trust. Therefore, in discoursing further, on this subject, I will endeavor, through divine assistance,

I. To consider the fidelity of a minister, as consisting in *a full and complete* declaration of the counsel of God.

II. To consider the difficulties which may lie in his way, or tempt him to *shun* any part of his work.

III. To make a particular improvement of the subject, by giving you my parting advices, in the spirit of this passage, and in a way, to the best of my judgment, suited to your situation.

First then, Let us consider the fidelity of a minister, as consisting in *a full and complete* declaration of the counsel of God. This is a circumstance which the apostle seems to have laid particular stress upon, in his discourse to the elders of Ephesus, as he not only rests his solemn appeal to themselves, in this passage, upon it, but had mentioned it before, verses, 20, 21. "And how I have kept back "nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed "you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to "house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Je-

" ſus Chriſt." It is, indeed, a circumſtance of the utmoſt moment, as miniſters may be ſuppoſed much more ready to fall ſhort in this reſpect than in any other. It is probable that many more are chargeable with concealing truth, than affirming falſhood; with neglecting duty, than committing crimes; with not building the houſe, than wilfully pulling it down. Agreeably to this, we find the charge of the prophet, againſt unfaithful ſhepherds, is chiefly or only for neglect of duty, Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 3, 4. " Son " of man, propheſy againſt the ſhepherds of Iſrael, prophe- " ſy and ſay unto them, thus ſaith the Lord God unto the " ſhepherds, wo be to the ſhepherds of Iſrael, that do feed " themſelves: ſhould not the ſhepherds feed the flocks? " Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill " them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock: the diſ- " eaſed have ye not ſtrengthened, neither have ye healed " that which was ſick, neither have ye bound up that " which was broken, neither have ye brought again that " which was driven away, neither have ye ſought that " which was loſt, but with force and with cruelty have ye " ruled them." But that you may have as comprehenſive a view as poſſible, of the character of a faithful miniſter, given in the text, obſerve, that integrity in declaring all the counſel of God, implies the following particulars.

1. Declaring all the truths of God, without any exceptions. The revealed will of God is of great extent and compaſs. It takes in all that we are to believe concerning God, and all the duty which God requires of man. It gives us an account of the original, and of the fallen ſtate of man; of the early purpoſe of divine mercy, and the ſteps that were taken, from age to age, in carrying it into execution; of the perſon, undertaking, and ſufferings of the Saviour; of his laws as a teacher, and his dominion as a king. Together with all this, we have a hiſtory of Providence, and many ſpecial examples, inſtructions, and warnings of the moſt particular kind. Now, my brethren, he who would declare *all the counsel of God*, muſt pay a due regard to every part, and, as far as time and health is given him, endeavor to make his people acquainted with the whole. This, to be ſure, cannot be done all at

once, and at the same time. Doubtless there are some truths of more importance than others. As the foundation must be laid before the structure can be raised, and the foundation and the corner stones are of more moment than the finishings of the surface: yet there is a mutual subserviency of every one in its place to another, and not the least can be wholly omitted without a real injury to those that are retained.

There is a preciousness in every truth that hath the stamp of divine authority upon it; and, therefore, to neglect any of them, and count them trifling, or of little moment, argues a want of reverence for the word of God. The holy scriptures, as they are full and complete, containing every thing that is necessary; so they are perfect and faultless, containing nothing that is unnecessary. Serious persons have often borne testimony to the great utility of such parts of the sacred oracles, as are commonly treated with most indifference. Nay, I cannot help thinking, that the veneration due to God, who doth nothing in vain, obliges us to believe the utility even of those passages whose purpose we ourselves may not as yet have clearly perceived.

They are therefore greatly to be blamed who are at no pains to make known the counsel of God, in its full extent; but how much more those who satisfy themselves with insisting upon some things, which may be most agreeable to their own taste and disposition, to the entire neglect of others that are perhaps of equal or of greater moment? We see this happen too frequently, that things which fill almost every page in the holy scriptures can scarce obtain a place in many sermons. We see some, industriously avoid the truths of the everlasting gospel, and others the duties of the moral law. The evil of this is the greater, that there is such a relation between the several parts of God's revealed will, that if any one is left out, every view given of the rest must be not only partial but unjust. He who truly understands the scriptures, will soon perceive, that there is such an inseparable connection between one truth and another, that you can hardly admit one without admitting or rejecting the whole; and

that none of them can be withdrawn, or concealed, without a manifeſt injury to the beauty and fulneſs of the general ſyſtem.

But, of all others, the moſt wonderful ſet of men are thoſe, who are for concealing ſome of the truths of God, leſt they ſhould be abuſed. The ſovereignty of God, his eternal purpoſe and the freeneſs of his grace, are often paſſed by, under this ridiculous pretence. I would deſpiſe the wiſdom of ſuch perſons; it is arrogance; it is impiety. I do not know any truth that cannot be abuſed by perverſe and corrupt minds, or that has not, in many inſtances, been abuſed. But is this a reaſon for concealing them? No. I would preach them openly; I would preach them fully; I would endeavor to guard them againſt the abuſe; and let ſinners know, that, if they wreſt the good word of God, they do it to their own deſtruction. Oh! that there were more ſubjection of mind to the wiſdom of God: more of a deep and inward conviction, that whatever he hath appointed, is, for that very reaſon, wiſeſt and beſt. There would not then be ſo many attempts to explain away what is clearly contained in the New Teſtament; but we ſhould join, from the heart, with the apoſtle Paul in ſaying, Rom. xi. 33. "O the "depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge "of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his "ways paſt finding out?"

2. Integrity of declaring *all the counsel of God*, implies preaching the truths of the goſpel in their full and juſt proportion. Under the former particular, I have ſhewn the neceſſity of doing juſtice to every truth; let us now add the duty of giving their full room and place to important and fundamental truths. In order to make a juſt portrait of a human body, it is neceſſary, not only to have all the parts, but to have every one in the true proportion it bears to another. If one member is ſwelled to an unnatural or monſtrous bulk, and others are ſhrunk or ſhrivelled away almoſt to nothing, it will make the moſt unſeemly figure. Agreeably to this, he, who would faithfully *declare the counsel of God*, muſt have a particular eye to the great and leading truths of the goſpel, on

which the reſt depend, and from which they derive their force and meaning.

If we look into the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, we ſhall find certain leading truths, which are of ſo great moment, that they ought hardly ever to be out of view; ſuch as the loſt ſtate of man by nature; the abſolute neceſſity of ſalvation through Chriſt; the ſuffering of the Saviour in the ſinner's room; and free forgiveneſs through the blood of the atonement; the neceſſity of regeneration; and the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, to enlighten, ſanctify and comfort his people. Theſe truths are of ſuch unſpeakable moment, in divine revelation, that they ought to be clearly explained, ſtrongly inculcated, and frequently repeated; they are the doctrines of the reformation; they make the ſubſtance of all the Proteſtant confeſſions; they are the glory of the Proteſtant churches; and have been ſealed by the blood of thouſands of ſuffering martyrs. And, indeed, it comforts me, under the neglect with which they are treated, at preſent, by many worldly perſons in a ſtate of outward eaſe and ſecurity to the church, that, if ever it pleaſe God, for our ſins, to throw us into the furnace, they will then diſcover their honor, they will recover their luſtre, becauſe they will certainly manifeſt their influence.

How ſhall I make you more ſenſible, what it is to give their full room to theſe important truths, than by putting you in mind of the regard that was paid to them by the apoſtles of our Lord, who received their commiſſion immediately from himſelf, and were not only the firſt, but the beſt and moſt ſucceſsful miniſters that ever were employed in the church of Chriſt? What a multitude of paſſages might I cite to this purpoſe? Acts iv. 12. "Neither "is there ſalvation in any other; for there is none other "name under heaven given among men, whereby we "muſt be ſaved." 1 Cor. iii. 11. "For other foundation "can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt." Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9. "But what things were gain to me, thoſe "I counted loſs for Chriſt. Yea, doubtleſs, and I count "all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of "Chriſt Jeſus, my Lord, for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of

" all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win " Chriſt, and be found in him, not having mine own " righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is " through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of " God by faith?" Without citing any more paſſages, I ſhall only obſerve, that though the apoſtles introduced a great variety of truths in their writings occaſionally, ſuch was, in their opinion, the importance of the doctrine of ſalvation by the croſs of Chriſt, that they denominated the goſpel by it. Preaching Chriſt, and preaching the croſs of Chriſt, was, with them, the ſame thing as preaching the whole. I do not think the apoſtle Paul was defective, in giving particular inſtructions, upon every ſubject, to thoſe churches which he either planted or watered; yet he ſays to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. ii. 2. " For I determined not " to know any thing among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and " him crucified;" intimating that ſuch was his attachment to that great truth, that it would occupy, in a manner, the whole of his time and labor; or rather, that it had ſuch an intimate connection with every other part of the will of God, that, be the ſubject what it would, this could hardly be entirely out of view.

He, who would declare the whole *counsel of God*, muſt ſtill place theſe great and operative doctrines in a conſpicuous point of view; he muſt not paſs them over ſlightly; he muſt not even ſpeak of them coldly, but in ſuch a manner, as to ſhow, that he knows their truth, and feels their moment. What an inconſiſtency for a Chriſtian miniſter, to ſpeak of the Lord Redeemer in ſuch a ſtyle, as naturally leads the hearers to put him upon a level with Socrates or Plato, or other uninſpired teachers, who never pretended to be ſaviours? What poiſon to the ſouls of men, for any to ſpeak, as if they were ſpeaking to Adam before the fall, and to ſing thoſe ſinners aſleep in ſecurity, whom they ſhould endeavor to alarm, that they may be perſuaded to flee from the wrath to come? What betraying of their truſt, to entertain their people with an affected diſplay of their own talents, or idle ſpeculations, to amuſe the fancy, when they ſhould be building them up in holineſs and comfort, through faith, unto ſal-

vation? The very manner of preaching may be oppoſite to the doctrine of the croſs, which hath ſo much humility and ſelf-denial in it, as will inſpire, and give a color, if I may ſpeak ſo, to every word that is ſpoken by him that firmly believes it. On the whole, no other truth or duty will be neglected by a faithful miniſter; but the oftener he ſtands, as it were, in the centre of the plan, the more frequently he contemplates the croſs of Chriſt, in which all the lines of divine truth are united, the more clearly will he ſee them, and the better will he be able to judge at what time and place to introduce them.

This leads me to obſerve, in the

3d Place, That to *declare all the counsel of God*, is to preach all the truths of God in their proper order and connection. To allude to the ſimilitude formerly uſed of making a portrait of a human body, every member muſt not only be in its juſt proportion, but in its proper place. In teaching every ſcience, there is a certain order that muſt be obſerved, otherwiſe the labor will be in a great meaſure loſt; but it holds in nothing more ſtrongly, than in teaching religion, and opening the truths of the goſpel. I might confirm this by many examples, or rather, indeed, by going through the whole ſyſtem of divine truth, but ſhall only make a remark or two, for illuſtrating the obſervation. The neceſſity of ſalvation by Chriſt, is founded upon the loſt ſtate of man by nature. Unleſs the one is firſt eſtabliſhed, the beauty and meaning of the other will wholly diſappear; unleſs we are now in a corrupt and guilty ſtate; unleſs man has indeed, loſt the knowledge of the true God, the kindneſs of God to his peculiar people, the promiſes in the prophetic writings of light to the Gentiles, and the riches of divine grace in the goſpel, ſpoken of in ſuch magnificent terms, muſt all appear inconſiderable, and unworthy of regard. Unleſs you can convince men of their ſins, and make them ſenſible of the holineſs and juſtice of God, in vain will you preach the goſpel to them; in vain will you call it "glad tidings of great joy "to all people;" they do not underſtand the terms, they will deride the meſſage, and ſpurn the offered mercy.

If you preach the free forgiveneſs of ſin through Chriſt, without, at the ſame time, ſhewing the neceſſity of regeneration and ſanctification by his Spirit, it will either not be embraced at all, or it will be turned into licentiouſneſs. And, if you preach the duties of the law, without, at the ſame time, diſplaying the grace of the goſpel, and the vital influence that flows from the head to the members, you will either build up men in a deſtructive ſyſtem of Phariſaical religion and ſelf-righteouſneſs, or bring them under the Egyptian bondage, of making brick, though they are not furniſhed with ſtraw. The privileges and duties of the goſpel ſtand in an inſeparable connection; if you take away the firſt, you ſtarve and mortify the laſt. Hear what our Lord himſelf ſays, John xv. 4, 5. "Abide "in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit, "of itſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, "except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the bran- "ches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame "bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do "nothing." I ſay the ſame thing of not inforcing the duties of the goſpel with the great and powerful motives drawn from its truths. You ſee in what a convincing and affecting manner the apoſtle Paul ſpeaks of his own conduct, and that of the other apoſtles, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. "For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus "judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and "that he died for all, that they which live, ſhould not "henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him which "died for them, and roſe again." It is, doubtleſs, lawful, nay, it is for the glory of God, to make occaſional mention of every argument againſt ſin, drawn from nature, reaſon, and experience, to ſhew that, "the law is "holy, the commandment holy, juſt, and good." But let us not hope to make conſcientious, active, fruitful Chriſtians, any other way, than by teaching them to live "the life that they live in the fleſh, a life of faith on the "Son of God, who loved them, and gave himſelf for "them."

All who know the grace of God in truth, will deſire to have this connection between one truth and another, and

the influence of truth on duty inviolably preſerved. It is, indeed, common with ſome to alledge, that the friends of the goſpel, thoſe who are attached to the doctrine of redemption, are enemies to the law, and that they do not love to hear their duty preached to them. I look upon this as an unjuſt and deteſtable ſlander, and commonly ſpread by thoſe who know nothing of the ſubſerviency of the law to the goſpel, or rather who underſtand very little either of the one or the other. If a miniſter preaches the holineſs of God's nature, with whom evil cannot dwell; if he preaches the duties of the moral law, in all the force of its unchangeable obligation, and all the terror of its awful ſanction, in order to convince his hearers, that they are liable to wrath, I know no ſound Chriſtian who will find fault with it: nay, I am perſuaded, that miniſters, who love the doctrine of ſalvation by grace, do often preach the moral law in ſuch terms, that many legal perſons are ready to tremble at the hearing of it; for they willingly uſe the words of the apoſtle Paul, Gal. iii. 10. "For as ma-"ny as are of the works of the law, are under the curſe; "for it is written, curſed is every one that continueth not "in all things which are written in the book of the law "to do them." But if ſerious perſons hear the duties of the law, preached as the grounds of their acceptance, and the foundation of their peace with God, it is no wonder that they ſay, after an approved example, "if righteouſ-"neſs came by the law, then Chriſt is dead in vain."

Again, if a miniſter preach the duties of the goſpel, explain them in all their extent, and preſs them by arguments drawn from the New Teſtament, as the fruits of faith, as the evidences of their change, as a debt of gratitude to their Redeemer, as the marks of their relation to him, and neceſſary to fit them for his preſence, I believe it will not be unacceptable to any of his people. On the contrary, they do uſually both approve and delight in theſe ſermons which are moſt ſearching to the conſcience, and moſt clear and explicit in the trial of their ſtate. Titus iii. 8. "This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that "thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in "God might be careful to maintain good works: theſe

" things are good and profitable unto men." It is our duty to ſhew, not only that profeſſing Chriſtians ought to be holy, but that they muſt be holy; and that if they live and die the ſlaves of any known ſin, Chriſt, and all that he hath done, ſhall profit them nothing, but only aggravate their condemnation. I will bear this teſtimony to my own hearers, that, as it was always a principle with me, to preach the doctrines of redemption where they are, and not to attempt to find them where they are not, by a boundleſs allegorical interpretation; ſo theſe ſermons, which have been wholly employed in explaining and enforcing particular duties, opening their principles, diſtinguiſhing them from their counterfeits, and preſſing them upon the conſcience, have met with as much approbation, and been heard with as little ſuſpicion as any whatever. But if any miniſter had preached in ſuch a manner, as to ſet the doctrine of ſalvation altogether aſide, and to ſuppoſe that we could obey in our own ſtrength, or that God was indebted to us for our works, inſtead of our being indebted to him, both for ſtrength to perform them, and mercy to accept them, I believe it would not have paſſed without cenſure; and I ſincerely pray, that the time may never come, when it will, in any corner of this church, but eſpecially from the pulpit in which I now ſtand.

The deluſion and abſurdity that finds place with many, deſerves the greateſt pity. It is not uncommon to hear certain perſons pouring out the bittereſt invectives in pulpit and converſation againſt others, as enemies to morality, as turning the grace of God into licentiouſneſs, as not only neglecting, but even oppoſing the obligation of his law. In the mean while, if you hear the firſt, you ſhall rarely meet with any thing but what is quite looſe and general, a declamation on the beauty of virtue, and the neceſſity of holineſs, or a very imperfect ſketch of the offices due from man to man in the common intercourſe of ſocial life. And, if you hear the other, it is probable you may hear many of the hard ſayings of the goſpel, not only the neceſſity of doing juſtice, and loving mercy, with the certain damnation of thoſe who hold unjuſt gain without reſtitution; but the neceſſity of loving God above all created

comforts, habitually directing every part of our conduct to his glory, and being sincerely and without reserve, submissive to his providence. You may also, probably, hear the duties of every relation descended to with a particularity, and the neglect or breach of them reproved with a severity, that is no where else to be found. Now, I desire to know which of these are the greatest friends to morality. So strong is the deception, that I have known several of the hearers of the most boasted moral preachers, who could not avoid betraying, by their discourse, that they considered the exercises of piety, as no part of morality, and very consistently, indeed, with these principles, treated them with the most absolute neglect.

I have little hope of the conviction, but would gladly, if possible, stop the mouths of gainsayers on this subject. Is it not usual to mark out the friends of salvation by grace, under the title of extraordinary strict, and eminent professors; generally, indeed, with a view to challenge the sincerity of that profession, and load it with obloquy and reproach? But consider, I pray you, with what propriety you give them the name of professors? what is it that they profess? It is, that they are nothing in themselves and deserve nothing at the hand of God but wrath for their sins; that they have no hope of acceptance, but by the free grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ; that they can do nothing of themselves that is good, but by the grace of God, are what they are; so that there is no room left for them to glory. Is not this their faith and persuasion? Why are they then called professors? You are the professors, who make your boast of the law, and glory in the excellence and perfection of human virtue. Shew us then your faith by your works; justify your profession by your practice; boasting will bring you little credit. But let us see who have the most sober, honest, holy, heavenly lives; these are certainly actuated by the best principles.

But, I must, in part, retract what I have said; for, after all, the servants of Christ are indeed professors. They have taken on the holy profession of the gospel: and, in fact, any instance of irregular conduct in them is more observed, more deeply reproached, and gives greater of-

fence than the very fame in perfons of a different character. When they depart from their duty, and from ftrictneſs of converſation, I give them freely up to the cenſures of their enemies; they have richly deſerved them, and therefore they ought to bear them. In the mean time, let me put thoſe in mind, who, in the midſt of their triumph, ſtigmatize them with the name of *professors*, that they do them, or rather their profeſſion, more honor than they are aware of; for they ſhow that they themſelves are ſenſible that ſuch principles ought to have produced holineſs in the converſation. So far as they reproach the ſinner, or the detected hypocrite, they do what is right, and it can ſcarcely be over done. But, when they take occaſion to bring a reproach on the *profession* itſelf, their very ſucceſs is a condemnation of themſelves; for that the groſs crimes of their own admirers, are leſs offenſive, is juſt becauſe their *profession* is leſs holy. Nothing would give me greater pain, than to underſtand that my doctrine were to the taſte of midnight rioters, ſwearers, and Sabbath breakers; and, if any ſuch are found among the admirers of moral preaching, their teachers could not do themſelves a greater honor, than by renouncing the connection.

4th. Fidelity in declaring the whole *counsel of God*, implies preaching every truth in its proper ſeaſon. "There "is as Solomon tells us, a time for every thing under the "ſun;" and, where the truths of the goſpel are taught in their ſeaſon, it gives them a particular luſtre, as well as an uncommon force. That you may underſtand what I mean by preaching the truths of religion in their ſeaſon, you may obſerve, that, beſides giving with aſſiduity and care, the neceſſary inſtructions for every particular duty incumbent on perſons, families or congregations, the ſeaſon may vary, and the propriety and neceſſity of inſiſting upon ſome truths, may ariſe from two circumſtances;—the ſtate of religion among a people;—and the aſpect of providence towards them.

1ſt, It may ariſe from the ſtate of religion among a people. Surely it is the duty of a miniſter to ſuit his inſtructions to the preſent and moſt preſſing neceſſities of his

hearers; not to foſter their prejudices, but, with care and judgment, to correct them; not to pardon or overlook their prevailing errors, but to rectify them; not to bear with epidemic ſins, but, with boldneſs and ſeverity, to reprove them. It will be ſeen, on the following head, that ſome of the greateſt difficulties that lie in the way of miniſters, and the ſtrongeſt temptations to unfaithfulneſs, come from this quarter. At preſent I ſhall only ſhortly illuſtrate the obſervation, and ſupport it by the practice of the apoſtles. We ſee, that, in ſpeaking either to perſons or churches, they took care to have a particular eye to their ſtate and character, and adapted their inſtructions, and even their expreſſions, to theſe circumſtances with the utmoſt fidelity, and the greateſt ſkill. Neither is there any way by which we can ſo well enter into the meaning of the ſcriptures, or perceive their beauty, as by conſidering the condition and characters of thoſe to whom the ſeveral parts of them are immediately addreſſed. We ſhall alſo ſee a mixture of zeal and prudence in the holy apoſtles, when acting under the direction of the Spirit of God. What an admirable example have we of propriety and fidelity in the apoſtle Paul's diſcourſe to Felix, the Roman governor, when he deſired to hear him concerning the faith of Chriſt? We are told, Acts xxiv. 25. that he took occaſion to "reaſon of righteouſneſs, temperance, "and judgment to come." In ſpeaking to one, who had, probably, no other intention, in deſiring to hear him, than to gratify his curioſity, by obtaining a diſtinct account of the wonderful hiſtory of Chriſt, he thought proper to apply to all thoſe principles of natural conſcience which might be ſuppoſed, yet to retain ſome power over him. And if (as many judicious interpreters think) inſtead of temperance, we ſhould read continence, it was a bold and ſevere, yet well-timed reproof to him and Druſilla, who were then living in adultery. We cannot help alſo being ſtruck with the unſhaken boldneſs of the Apoſtle, who could ſpeak with ſo much freedom to the governor, in whoſe hands he was then as a priſoner, and before whom he expected ſoon to ſtand, and receive ſentence from him as a judge.

You may alſo obſerve the apoſtle Paul's attention to, and concern for the particular ſtate of the churches to which he wrote his epiſtles. The church of Corinth ſeems to have been greatly infeſted with diviſions and contentions, and theſe unhappily inflamed by ambitious and factious teachers, under whom they were marſhalled as ſo many leaders, and to whoſe name and intereſt they ſeem to have been more devoted, than even to thoſe of their Maſter, 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4. "For ye are yet carnal: for "whereas there is among you envying, and ſtrife, and "diviſions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For, "while one ſaith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of A-"pollos, are ye not carnal?" Againſt this the apoſtle writes with the greateſt zeal and warmth, and, at the ſame time, with the greateſt prudence. He ſhews how inconſiſtent it was with the ſpirit of the goſpel, and how derogatory to the honor of Chriſt. He endeavors to make them ſenſible that the moſt able and faithful miniſters were no more than inſtruments in his hand, and owed their ſucceſs entirely to the bleſſing of God accompanying their labors, as in the ſame chapter, ver. 5, 6, 7. "Who "then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but miniſters by whom "ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I "have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the in-"creaſe. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, "neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the in-"creaſe." What deſerves particular notice, is, that, in all probability, the mention of himſelf and Apollos here, was merely hypothetical, or to ſerve by way of example. The real heads of the parties in the Corinthian church, were other teachers than either Paul or Apollos, whom he did not chuſe to name, but ſtated his argument in this leſs offenſive and more convincing form. The truth is, there is no diſorder in a church, that is harder to deal with, than a ſpirit of contention. Other ſins may be reproved with ſeverity, and you will be ſuppoſed to be in the exerciſe of your duty when doing ſo; but this will not allow itſelf to be reproved, becauſe it will not confeſs itſelf to be a crime, and is therefore often exaſperated by the attempts to heal it. You may ſee ſometimes a man of ſtrife cover

all under a flaming profeſſion of religion, and yet conduct it in ſuch a manner, that we may ſay of him, as the ſervants of Nabal ſaid of their maſter, "he is ſuch a ſon of "Belial, that a man cannot ſpeak to him."

I might produce many other examples from the holy Scriptures; but theſe are ſufficient, to ſhew that it is the duty of a miniſter to ſuit himſelf to the ſtate of religion among his people, by with-holding nothing that is profitable, but particularly inſiſting on what is moſt needful. If any of the truths of the goſpel are in danger of being neglected, if they are undermined by ſecret, or aſſaulted by open enemies, it is the duty of a miniſter to make frequent mention of them, leſt they ſhould be forgotten; and to ſupport and confirm them, that they may obtain acceptance. If any duty is in danger of falling into diſeſteem, and a falſe ſhame makes many decline the practice, a faithful miniſter ſhould ſtand forth an open and zealous advocate for its continuance. If any particular ſin, or ſins, prevail remarkably in a place, and appear to be gaining ground, it is the duty of a miniſter to beware of yielding to the ſtream, or ſeeking his own quiet by ſilence; on the contrary, he ought to double his diligence, and make the moſt reſolute and vigorous oppoſition to the incroaching evil. Of all this, I ſuppoſe, you will clearly perceive both the meaning and the juſtice. Theſe circumſtances are the intimations of Providence, and point out, in the moſt ſignificant manner, not only what is a part of a miniſter's work in general, but alſo what is the immediate will of God as to his preſent duty.

2dly. The proper ſeaſon of inſiſting on particular truths may ariſe from the aſpect of providence towards the church in general, or a congregation, family, or perſon in particular. You ſee the apoſtles conſtantly make uſe of the ſtate of the church in their time, the number and violence of its enemies, to excite the ſervants of Chriſt to vigilance, to exhort them to conſtancy, and to exerciſe them to patience. They alſo ſeem particularly attentive to teach their converts to make uſe of the conſolations of the goſpel with this view, Rom. viii. 18. "For I reckon, that "the ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to

" be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in " us"—and the ſame chapter, verſes 35, 36, 37. " Who " ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? ſhall tribula- " tion, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, " or peril, or ſword? (As it is written, for thy ſake we " are killed all the day long; we are accounted as ſheep " for the ſlaughter.) Nay, in all theſe things we are more " than conquerors, through him that loved us." Impending calamities of ſuch an alarming nature that they ſpeak, as it were, of themſelves, and afford the nobleſt opportunities of awakening the attention, and moving the affections, of bringing the careleſs to conviction, and ſtirring up the holy to watchfulneſs. In times of public danger too the ſelf-ſeeking miniſter throws off the maſk, and deſerts the cauſe, while the faithful who remain, are neceſſarily animated with uncommon zeal.

But a different aſpect of Providence calls alſo for inſtruction in ſeaſon. In times of public quiet and ſecurity, there is the greateſt reaſon to dread, and, by conſequence, to guard againſt indifference and formality in religion, on the one hand, or unneceſſary contention about it on the other. When the profeſſion of the goſpel is at any rate ſafe, and in ſome degree profitable, the church is always incumbered with a dead weight of cuſtomary Chriſtians, who receive their religion from their fathers, and continue to tread, as it were, in the beaten path. It is no eaſy matter, to ſhake their ſecurity, when every outward circumſtance conſpires to increaſe it. And as the ſpiritual ſlumber takes hold, in ſome meaſure, even of thoſe who are alive unto God, it is no trifling taſk to exerciſe diſcipline, at once with prudence and with firmneſs, and to preſerve the life and power of religion, when every thing is ſtiffening into form. It is very eaſy, indeed, when there is a hard conflict between health and corruption, in the body of Chriſt, that is to ſay, in his viſible church, for one, or a few members, to pour out complaints againſt thoſe who govern it; to lay to the charge of miniſters thoſe abuſes which are the grief of their hearts; and, all at once, to ſet about making a new model according to their own fancy. But I apprehend it is a much better, though

a more difficult duty, to obey the Redeemer's counſel, to "be watchful, and ſtrengthen the things that remain and "are ready to die." Alas! how often do the new diſorders that break out in ſeparating ſocieties, betray the naughty materials of which they are compoſed. They are much in the ſame way as the fool who ran away from his own ſhadow, but run where he would, it was as ſoon there as he. They run away from the corruption of human nature, and they ſhall never be quit of it, becauſe they carry it with them.

There is one other temptation which I ſhall briefly mention, as almoſt inſeparable from a ſtate of outward quiet in the church of Chriſt. Thoſe, if I may ſpeak ſo, who keep their garments clean, as to the *ſins*, are ſcarcely able to bear up under the *trials* of the times. When they ſee one attempt after another, for the revival of truth and righteouſneſs, defeated by the ſtrength of corruption, they are in danger of impatience and fretfulneſs againſt Providence, and ſometimes are even tempted to call in queſtion the reality of religion altogether; as if it did not meet with that ſupport and countenance, from the great Ruler, which they think is its due. But the moſt common danger is, that of falling into a deſpondent neglect of duty, of not doing what they ought, becauſe it has not hitherto had the effect which they deſire. In ſuch a caſe, no doubt, it is the duty of miniſters to fortify them, by giving proper views of the wiſdom and ſovereignty of Providence; by ſhewing the paths of God towards his church, in ancient times; and that theſe have, in every age, been the complaints and fears of good men, from the weakneſs of their faith, and the imperfection of their knowledge. It was the complaint of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxix. 4. "We are "become a reproach to our neighbors, a ſcorn and derii- "ſion to them that are round about us." But it led him to prayer for the revival of religion, as well as the proſperity of his country, verſe 5. "How long, Lord, wilt thou "be angry forever? ſhall thy jealouſy burn like fire?" and, in the 8th and 9th verſes, "O remember not againſt "us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies ſpeedily "prevent us: for we are brought very low. Help us, O

" God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name : and " deliver us, and purge away our sins for thy name's " sake."

But the course of Providence, towards the church in general, is not only to be observed and improved, but whatever is remarkable or singular, in particular congregations. I shall not dwell upon examples of this, because it is my purpose to put it into practice, and by that means, to illustrate it in the application of this discourse. Let it suffice to say, that those truths, or exhortations, which are founded on the visible state of providence, carry a degree of evidence and weight with them, that is peculiar to themselves. Known characters and scenes illustrate the description, facilitate the application, and increase the conviction. I do not mean the exposing of particular persons, by the introduction of single and recent facts. But if a minister is able with judgment and propriety, to reflect light upon divine truth, by pointing out the evil consequences of sin in general, the causes of the prevalence of one sin more than another, and the insensible changes that are produced in the manners of men, by the change of their outward condition, it is certainly his duty; and when the state of his own people furnishes the opportunity, if he would speak the word in season, he ought not to let it pass.

To these observations I only add, that, in the whole course of private parochial duties, a faithful minister will speak the truths of God in their proper season. If in family visitation, or private and personal admonition, he hath not a particular view, either to their character, as far as it is known, or their state in providence, however excellent or important his instructions may be, in other respects, he declareth not the whole counsel of God. But if he is truly actuated by a desire of being useful, and keeps this circumstance in his eye, with what readiness will he communicate instruction to the ignorant, consolation to the distrest, and reproof to the obstinate? He will recommend to the rich, humility and liberality ; to all who are in poverty patience and industry ; to parents, assiduity in teaching and government ; to children, obedience, attention,

and ſubjection; and to ſervants, integrity and faithfulneſs in their truſt; or, in the language of the Holy Ghoſt, as a wiſe ſervant, "he will give to every one his portion of "meat in due ſeaſon."

5. In the laſt place, *declaring the whole counsel of God*, implies preaching the truths of the goſpel, honeſtly and boldly, without reſpect of perſons. I am perſuaded the apoſtle Paul, who was himſelf ſo remarkable for an undaunted courage in his Maſter's cauſe, had this, amongſt other things, in view, when he ſays, he had not *shunned* to declare the counſel of God. There are few temptations more dangerous, to a miniſter, than the fear of man. Such is the malignant enmity of the wicked againſt the good, that he may ſuffer injury from them in his name, his ſubſtance, and even his perſon. Againſt this danger our Saviour has warned his diſciples in the following paſſage, Luke xii. 4. "And I ſay unto you, my friends, be not "afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no "more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom "you ſhall fear: fear him which, after he hath killed, hath "power to caſt into hell; yea, I ſay unto you fear him." It is remarkable, that in the prayers recorded in ſcripture, as offered up by the apoſtles, for divine aſſiſtance in their ſacred office, as well as thoſe paſſages in which they aſk the prayers and interceſſion of their fellow Chriſtians, this circumſtance is almoſt never forgotten. Boldneſs and reſolution was what they ſaw they ſhould always ſtand in need of, Acts iv. 29. "And now, Lord, behold their threat-"nings, and grant unto thy ſervants, that, with all bold-"neſs, they may ſpeak thy word." Eph. vi. 18, 19. "Praying always, with all prayer and ſupplication, in the "ſpirit, and watching thereunto, with all perſeverance "and ſupplication for all ſaints: and for me, that utter-"ance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth "boldly, to make known the myſtery of the Goſpel.

The trials of the apoſtles were indeed in this reſpect uncommonly ſevere; but, even ſetting aſide the caſe of open perſecution, there is great reaſon for miniſters to guard againſt that fear of man, which bringeth a ſnare. As their hearers are of all different ranks and degrees,

they ought, with the utmoſt impartiality, to preach the duties incumbent upon, and reprove the ſins that cleave to men of every ſtation. As they ſpeak in the name of God, and carry a meſſage from the King of kings, they ought to do it with the dignity that becomes an ambaſſador from him. They ought not to be diſmayed at the preſence of the moſt high and mighty of their fellow ſinners, when they remember the continual preſence of him before whom "mean men are vanity, and great men are a lie." I know, my brethren, that there is a reſpect and deference due to men, according to their ſtation, and that a conſcientious Chriſtian will give them the ſubjection that belongs to their rank, and authority in civil life, "not only "for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake." But this does not hinder him, who watches for their ſouls, to give them faithful warning, and, where it is neceſſary, to debar them from the ſeals of God's covenant, leſt they ſhould at once profane his ordinance, and ruin their own ſouls.

I ſay, and I pray you to attend to it, *ruin their own ſouls;* becauſe I know not a greater injury that can be done to the great, than that conſtant adulation that is paid to them, and that indulgence to their faults, which, by weakening the reproofs of conſcience, tends to hinder their repentance and reformation. I take this opportunity to ſay, that if eternity is of any moment the great are not to be envied, but pitied. Some are hindered by intereſt, and ſome by fear, from dealing plainly and faithfully with them; and it is wonderful to think how much the opinions and conduct of others blinds them as to the ſtate of their own ſouls. It is recorded, to the honor of an antient biſhop, that for an act of cruelty he debarred the emperor himſelf from the Lord's table. I know there are many who would pronounce this, immediately, the act of an ambitious and aſſuming prieſt; but it will always be, in my eyes, a revered example of honeſty and faithfulneſs in a miniſter of Chriſt.

II. I proceed, now, to the ſecond thing propoſed, which was to conſider the difficulties which may lie in a miniſter's way, and tempt him to *ſhun* any part of his work. Theſe

are very various, and not eaſy either to enumerate or deſcribe. What hath generally made the greateſt impreſſion upon me, either from experience or obſervation, I ſhall dwell upon a little: it may be reduced to the three following heads,——Sloth or worldlineſs in ourſelves,——the prejudices of our people,——and the oppoſition of our enemies.

1. Sloth or worldlineſs in miniſters, themſelves, may tempt them to ſhun ſome part of their work. You will ſee, from the preceding obſervations, that the work of a miniſter is both extenſive and difficult. It requires the greateſt intention of mind, the application, ſo to ſpeak, of the whole man. It requires judgment to lay down the plan, diligence and perſeverance to carry it into execution. Now ſlothfulneſs, and a love of eaſe or pleaſure, to which we have all too great a bias, muſt be a very dangerous temptation; to evade ſome part of the duty, or ſlur it over in a ſlight or careleſs manner. There is a very great difference between doing our work in ſome ſort, or ſo as to avoid puniſhment from our ſuperiors, eſpecially at a time when the reins of government are not held very hard, and doing it with that zeal and application which a concern for the glory of God, and love to the ſouls of men, ſhould habitually inſpire. We have all reaſon to be aſhamed, that the important objects we have in view, and the intereſting ſubjects we have to treat of, do not put an edge upon our ſpirits, and deliver us from that lazy unconcerned manner, which is equally diſhonorable to God, and hurtful to the ſouls of men. I take the liberty to obſerve, that ſlothfulneſs is very incident to perſons of conſiderable abilities; inſtead of being excited to improve their talents, they are inclined to truſt to them. Finding, by experience, that they can do tolerably with but little pains, they ſoon come to content themſelves with next to none. Perhaps I might apply here the common obſervation, that as few know their own weakneſs, ſo as few know their own ſtrength, or what they might do by the conſcientious improvement of their natural powers. We have ſeen many examples of perſons of weak capacity, who, by the help of piety and di-

ligence, have done every part of their miniſterial duty, in a manner far ſuperior to thoſe of much greater talents, whoſe heart did not lie to their work.

The danger of ſloth, as a temptation, will appear, in the ſtrongeſt light, from what has been ſaid, on the fidelity of a miniſter in declaring *all* the counſel of God. He may not only deal with a ſlack hand, and do his work imperfectly; but, as it conſiſts of very different parts, he may chuſe the eaſier, and leave the harder. He may apply chiefly to what is moſt pleaſant to himſelf, or what gives him the greateſt opportunity to ſhine in the eyes of others, while he neglects thoſe parts that are more burdenſome to the fleſh. The danger of this is the greater, that thoſe parts of a miniſter's work, to which a ſlothful mind is uſually moſt reluctant, are alſo thoſe, the neglect of which can be moſt eaſily palliated or concealed. And, indeed, it is wonderful to think what ingenious excuſes men will invent for the neglect of thoſe duties which they have no inclination to perform. I have often heard miniſters endeavor to prove, that viſitation of families, which doubtleſs is a very fatiguing, was alſo a very unprofitable and unneceſſary piece of ſervice, than which, I think, there never was any thing more manifeſtly falſe. It is not only, when executed with fidelity, of great immediate uſe, in itſelf, but, by giving a miniſter a thorough knowledge of his people, enables him to perform every other part of his work with the greater propriety and ſucceſs. A miniſter ought to be like a ſervant, wholly at his maſter's diſpoſal, who has no choice as to his work, but is ready to obey what God, in his Providence, ſhall ſee fit to command him.

I joined worldlineſs with ſloth, becauſe they are near of kin, and commonly co-operate one with another. It is not my intention, in any part of this reaſoning, to point out thoſe who are wholly unfaithful, and mean no more but to ſhear the fleece, without caring for the flock; but to ſhew how thoſe ſinful diſpoſitions, which, in part, take place in every one of us, if they be ſuffered to gather ſtrength, may obſtruct us in our duty. Too many worldly cares, or too much indulgence of worldly pleaſure,

muſt be a very dangerous temptation to thoſe who are intruſted with the care of ſouls. The apoſtle Paul ſays of himſelf, that he was "ſeparated to the goſpel of God," ſo is every miniſter of Chriſt. A prudent attention to his neceſſary proviſion, indeed, and ordering his affairs with diſcretion, is not only lawful, but highly uſeful and expedient; as it frees him from anxiety, and gives him greater liberty of mind for proſecuting the ends of his calling. But for one, appointed to labor in holy things, to be either ſordidly covetous, or from intereſted ambitious views to follow worldly occupations, is certainly either a ſacrilegious breach of truſt, or an unreaſonable and offenſive diſtruſt of God.

2. Another very great difficulty, which often lies in the way of a miniſter, ariſes from the prejudices of his people. It would be idle to ſuppoſe, that ever we ſhall find a people, among whom there are no miſtaken notions, or unjuſt prepoſſeſſions, which it is our duty, with prudence, but at the ſame time with honeſty, to withſtand. As no congregation can expect to meet with a perfect miniſter; ſo no miniſter ſhould expect to meet with a faultleſs congregation. If there were any ſuch, there would be little need of a miniſter at all. You are to obſerve, that I do not here chiefly intend that bias and propenſity to ſin, which is natural to us all, which reigns in the wicked, and ſtruggles for indulgence in the good; and, which, therefore, calls for "doctrine, reproof, and correction, and "inſtruction, in righteouſneſs." Though I muſt obſerve, that even with regard to this, when any ſin is common and prevalent in a place, when it has long kept poſſeſſion, and has been generally overlooked; if a miniſter ſees it his duty to reprove it with ſeverity, and eſpecially if he will not tolerate it without cenſure, he may expect no little difficulty and oppoſition. There are many who will complain of him as too rigid, and impute to ill-nature, and indiſcretion, what ariſes from the dictates of conſcience, and a ſenſe of duty. By bearing open teſtimony againſt the introduction of faſhionable amuſements, or conformity to the world, he will often incur not only the hatred of the profligate, but the diſapprobation of thoſe

prudent compliers, who are at once aſhamed to approve, and unwilling to oppoſe any ſinful relaxation.

But what I had chiefly in view, was, to mention theſe prejudices that may prevail, with regard to religion; and which may be of ſuch a nature, as a miniſter may be under a neceſſity not only of refuſing to comply with, but of oppoſing in the moſt direct and poſitive manner. If any error or miſtake, of conſequence, prevail, either among his people in general, or any part of them, either among the high or the low, the learned or the vulgar, he muſt endeavor to deſtroy it. There may be indeed prejudices of ſo trifling a nature, that, though he will never approve them, it is better entirely to overlook them; or in things that are merely indifferent, though unneceſſary, according to the apoſtolic example, of "becoming all things to all "men," it may be his duty ſometimes to comply with them. But this is not the caſe with any thing that affects the ſubſtance of religion, as to all which, if he attempt to pleaſe men, he is not the ſervant of Chriſt. Now, how great a difficulty muſt often ariſe from ſuch circumſtances? he is unwilling to loſe his place in the eſteem and affection of his people, in general, but eſpecially of thoſe whom he reckons to be the diſciples and friends of Chriſt. Yet this he muſt ſometimes forfeit for a ſeaſon, unleſs he will ſin againſt God, and thereby deſtroy his own peace. The beſt way for a miniſter to ſupport himſelf, in ſuch a ſituation, is, to remember, that as to his integrity before God, and the comfort of his own mind, the leſs regard he pays to the judgment of men, ſo much the better; if God be for him, it ſignifies little who be againſt him. And as to his uſefulneſs, he may ſafely commit it to God in his providence, who will certainly take care of it. Since he will not have it preſerved by ſinful compliance, he can eaſily reſtore it after it hath been a ſhort time ſuſpended, for conſcientious oppoſition. The truth is, an unſteady perſon, ſhaken by the breath of popular opinion, is unworthy of filling the ſtation of a miniſter of Chriſt. As he ſhould not be terrified by the threatenings of the great, neither ſhould he be overcome by the clamors of the multitude. And if neither humor nor intereſt, but conſcience, has in

deed been his guide, he may reſt aſſured that God, infinitely wiſe, will "bring forth his righteouſneſs as the "light, and his judgment as the noon day."

My brethren, I thank God, that I ſpeak this from a conviction of the general truth, more than from having ſuffered much in this reſpect in my own experience. I ſhall mention to you, however, one example, that I may illuſtrate the remark, and, at the ſame time, further diſcharge my own duty. It hath always ſeemed to me of great moment, to preſerve juſt views of the ſacraments, which are the ſeals of God's covenant, and the appointed means of the confirmation and comfort of his own people. Without mentioning, however, the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, I have found the greateſt difficulty in preſerving the ſacrament of baptiſm from profanation, and from that comparative diſregard under which it now lieth. This ariſes not only from the laxneſs of diſcipline in general, but from ſome miſtakes and prejudices on the ſubject of religion. It appears to me a thing undeniable, that both ſacraments are the ſeals of the ſame covenant, require the ſame terms of admiſſion, and operate to the benefit of the receivers upon the very ſame principles; that is to ſay, according to the excellent words of our Catechiſm, "Not from any "virtue in them, or in him that doth adminiſter them, but "only by the bleſſing of God, and the working of his Spi-"rit in them that by faith receive them." The only difference is, that, in the Lord's ſupper, every believer acts for himſelf perſonally; in the ſacrament of baptiſm, when adminiſtered to infants, the parent acts as a repreſentative, and ſponſor for his ſeed. None, therefore, ought to be admitted to baptiſm, more than to the Lord's ſupper, who have not a credible profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, and, in the judgment of charity, or rather the judgment of men, may be ſuppoſed real Chriſtians. Yet, is it not certain, that many, who are juſtly excluded from the Lord's table, and ſome who never aſked admiſſion to it, do inſiſt on preſenting their children to baptiſm, and are pleaded for by not a few of better character, who cry out againſt the refuſal, as an injury to the child, beſides other bad conſequences ſometimes pretended?

The chief complaint is, that it is a pity the child ſhould ſuffer for the fault of the father. This is the very error and prejudice in religion, which I think it my duty to oppoſe. It ariſes from a remaining degree of Popiſh ſuperſtition, to look upon the ſacraments as ſpells, or charms, which have ſome effect independent of the exerciſe of faith in the receiver. The ſacraments, my brethren, are not grace, but the means of it; they are not faith, but are appointed for the confirmation and growth of it. They belong to believers alone. They are ſeals of God's covenant; but they cannot ſeal that which was never made. It is juſt as if a man, who wanted to make a purchaſe from me, whoſe terms I had utterly rejected, and refuſed to give him my poſſeſſion, ſhould, notwithſtanding, perſiſt in writing out his contract, and ſigning it. Would this be of any effect? A contract is a ſure title to the bargain, where the conſent of both parties is aſcertained; but where one of theſe is wanting, it is abſolutely void, and of no effect. Infants cannot receive the ſacraments, by exerciſing faith themſelves; they have no right to receive the ſign at all, but as they are the ſeed of believing parents by profeſſion. Neither do they receive any real benefit from it, but when they are the ſeed of thoſe who believe ſincerely. If it be allowed, that an unbeliever, who receives the bread and wine at the Lord's table, receives no benefit to his own ſoul, how can it be imagined, or ſuppoſed, that an unbelieving parent, in baptiſm, can firſt receive, and then convey benefit to his new born child? His coming there at all, in ſuch a ſtate, is a preſumptuous profanation of a holy inſtitution. Now, though I can conceive eaſily, and do believe firmly, that many bleſſings are conveyed to children by an act of duty in their parents, I can neither conceive nor believe, that they can receive any advantage from an act of profanity and diſobedience.

The children of wicked parents, then, can receive no benefit by baptiſm, but what they would have whether they were baptized or not, viz. that they are brought up among profeſſing Chriſtians, and by that means have ſome opportunities of knowing the truths of the goſpel. And I cannot help thinking, it would, in the courſe of

providence, be an inducement to them to attend more ſeriouſly to what they are taught, if they conſidered themſelves as no members of the viſible church, till they underſtood the terms of admiſſion, and deſired it as their own choice. The caſe is very different with the children of real believers; they have a right to all the promiſes that are made to the ſeed of believers, as ſuch, by that God who "ſheweth mercy to thouſands of generations of them "that keep his commandments." Some, I believe many, think that they are doing honor to the ſacrament of baptiſm, by repreſenting the rite itſelf as of ſo great neceſſity; but it is preciſely that ſort of honor that the Papiſts do to it, by cauſing midwives and phyſicians inſtantly baptize the children that are in a weak ſtate, or by running to the beds of the ſick, with a little of the conſecrated wafer, and putting it in the mouth of a perſon either wholly inſenſible, or, perhaps, already dead. Our fathers, in the purer times of this church, whoſe inſtitutions and practice, the longer I live, I do the more eſteem and revere, in the moſt abſolute manner, prohibited all private baptiſm. Their great reaſon for this was to prevent the very abuſe I have been ſpeaking of, viz. the ſuperſtitious notion of the neceſſity of the outward rite to ſalvation, without a due attention to the manner of receiving it. And, indeed, it was their only reaſon; for they, who were ſo great enemies to the conſecration of places, and the holineſs of ſtones or timber, could never think that baptiſm, adminiſtered according to Chriſt's appointment, was invalid for being done in a private houſe, and not in a church, or in the preſence of a ſmall, rather than a numerous aſſembly.

Theſe things, my brethren, which I have often mentioned occaſionally, I have now repeated, and will add to them, that I think there is ſomething very incongruous, at leaſt unſuitable, in admitting any parent to preſent his child in baptiſm, whatever be his character in other reſpects, who has never aſked admiſſion to the Lord's table. Conſider, that in the adminiſtration of baptiſm, the parent is conſtantly taken bound to command his children, ſo ſoon as they come to years, to renew their baptiſmal engagement

in their own perſons. Now, what conſiſtency is there, in allowing a man to pledge his faith ſolemnly to God and his church, that he will command his child to do that which he habitually neglects to do himſelf. The pretence of fear, and unpreparedneſs for the Lord's table, is a condemnation of thoſe who offer it, becauſe it ſhews, that they ſuppoſe the one ſacrament requires a different character or eaſier terms of admiſſion than the other. After all, the above prejudices ſeem to me ſo deeply rooted with many, that they will not probably be ſoon deſtroyed; but I think it is the duty of every miniſter, in that, and all ſuch caſes, to ſpeak his mind plainly, and, to the utmoſt of his power, to act conſiſtently and uniformly, though he ſhould ſuffer by the ſlanders both of the ignorant and profane.

3. The laſt difficulty which I ſhall mention, as lying in the way of miniſters, is the oppoſition of their enemies. No faithful miniſter can expect to be without enemies. In a private character, and retired way of life, a man may, by very great prudence, and particularly by ſilence and forbearance, in a great meaſure, eſcape the reſentment or injuries of violent men. And to be as little embroiled with others as poſſible, is both our intereſt and our duty. "If it be poſſible," ſays the Apoſtle, "and as much "as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men." But it is certain, from long and invariable experience, that there is ſuch enmity and rancor in the hearts of wicked men againſt all who are in good earneſt about religion, that they may lay their account with continual oppoſition, and continual ſlander. This our Saviour teaches his diſciples to expect, and ſhews them, that it is the neceſſary conſequence of their relation to him, John, xv. 18, 19, 20, 21. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it "hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love "his own; but, becauſe ye are not of the world, but I have "choſen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. "Remember the word that I ſaid unto you, The ſervant "is not greater than the Lord. If they have perſecuted "me, they will alſo perſecute you. If they have kept my "ſaying, they will keep your's alſo. But all theſe things "will they do unto you for my name's ſake, becauſe they

" know not him that ſent me."—The apoſtle Paul alſo bears his teſtimony to the ſame truth, 2 Tim. iii. 12. " Yea, and all that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, ſhall " ſuffer perſecution."

But, if wicked men are injurious to the children God in general, their malice muſt be particularly whetted againſt a miniſter, ſo far as he does his duty. He is placed in a public ſtation, and is obliged to be active in his Maſter's cauſe. Time-ſerving or neutrality, as to the intereſt of religion, is commendable in none, but it is unpardonable in him. He muſt bear teſtimony openly and reſolutely againſt vice and wickedneſs. And reproof, when adminiſtered with ſeverity, is certain of making either a friend or an enemy. A faithful miniſter will not ſuffer Satan's kingdom to be at peace; and, therefore, it is no wonder, that, when they are gnawing their tongues with pain, they ſhould pour out their venom againſt him, who gives them ſo much diſturbance. The effect of reproof, in kindling the rage and malice of the guilty, was never better deſcribed than in the account of the trial and martyrdom of Stephen, particularly Acts vii. 54. "When " they heard theſe things, they were cut to the heart, and " they gnaſhed on him with their teeth."

There are many ways by which the enmity and oppoſition of wicked men to the truth may prove a temptation to a miniſter: a few of which I ſhall mention, as I hope the diſtinct knowledge of them may be profitable to you in the way of caution: 1ſt, As one of their chief weapons is contempt and deriſion, he may be in danger of concealing or perverting truth, in ſome degree, in order to avoid it. When the goſpel of Chriſt was firſt publiſhed, the doctrine of the croſs, we are told, was " to the Jews a " ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs." The ſame truth, in its ſimplicity, is ſtill treated with ſcorn by profane and worldly men. All that relates to it is conſidered as weakneſs and abſurdity; and the miniſter, who inſiſts upon it, muſt loſe his character with many for capacity and judgment. Is not this known to be true in daily experience? Are not ſuch immediately ſtigmatized as weak and babbling creatures? Now, it is not altogether

an eaſy ſacrifice for a miniſter, to be indifferent as to the opinion formed of his parts and ſufficiency, to wait till time ſhall do him juſtice, or to be altogether unconcerned whether it ever do him juſtice or not. It is no trifling thing to become *a fool* in the eye of the world *for Chriſt's ſake*, and *not to be aſhamed of his cross*. It may make many avoid ſuch ſubjects, at leaſt, more than they ought, or, perhaps, attempt to give them a polite or modiſh dreſs, which, of all others, is the moſt unſuitable to them; or it may make others go to the oppoſite extreme, who, becauſe they find that ſuch truths will be deſpiſed, are at no pains to avoid adding to the offence, by a ſilly and contemptible, or a crude and indigeſted manner of handling them. I know not, indeed, a more difficult thing, nor do I know any thing more noble in a miniſter, than to "ceaſe from man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils," to be truly ſuperior to the applauſe or cenſure of either one claſs or another of his hearers, and therefore to avoid a vain diſplay of human art; but, at the ſame time, from a ſenſe of duty to God, and veneration for his truths, to be at all due pains to treat them properly, ſo as they may appear with light and evidence to the underſtanding, and come home with force upon the conſcience. Such a man will bring forth the doctrines of the goſpel in their own unadorned majeſty and native ſimplicity; he will not conſider himſelf as preaching *before* his hearers as criticks; for what are they to him in this view? but he will conſider himſelf as preaching *to* them as ſinners, and pleading with them as immortal creatures, tottering upon the very brink of eternal perdition.

2dly, The oppoſition of enemies may tempt men of little courage to ſinful ſilence for their own quiet. When vice is prevalent, it is alſo commonly inſolent and reſentful. Now, the hatred or ill-will of no perſon is deſirable; and there are a thouſand ways in which any perſon of a revengeful ſpirit may be hurtful. There are alſo very few ſo unconnected, but that they have many friends, whoſe hatred is to be encountered as well as their own. The influence of this is but too much ſeen in every place. Offenders are often ſcreened from reproof or cenſure,

through fear of provoking them or their relations. Neither is it at all difficult to find palliating arguments, drawn from prudence, or other conſiderations to make us think it is neceſſary to forbear. I believe this is very much the fault of the preſent age, and the greater and more general the relaxation of diſcipline in any age or place, the more difficult and dangerous it is for any one to ſtep forth and aſſert its dignity and obligation. And yet I cannot help thinking, the great excellence of diſcipline, is its impartiality, not to reſpect perſons in judgment. How can we defend ourſelves, if we make one law for one, and another for another; if we cenſure the ſmall, and forgive the great?

3dly, Miniſters of weak minds may be apt to ſink under the oppoſition of the wicked. It is ſaid of Lot, dwelling in Sodom, that he was, 2 Peter ii. 7, 8. "—Vexed "with the filthy converſation of the wicked; for that "righteous man dwelling among them, in ſeeing and "hearing, vexed his righteous ſoul from day to day with "their unlawful deeds." It certainly needs no ſmall meaſure of fortitude and holy reſolution, to perſiſt in the diſcharge of our duty, notwithſtanding the obſtinacy of ſinners, and to ſeek our comfort, under continual obloquy, from the approbation of him, that judgeth righteouſly. At the ſame time, I muſt ſay, that the friendſhip of wicked men is much more dangerous than their enmity; for the firſt brings with it the danger of ſeduction, and the laſt only expoſes us to ſuffering, which, though itſelf is a ſpecies of temptation, as I ſhall immediately ſhew, is much leſs powerful than the other.

4thly, The oppoſition of wicked men may prove a temptation, as it may bring forth the remains of corruption that are in the hearts of good men, and make them ſin, by imprudence or paſſion, if not by reſentment. I have no where ſuppoſed that miniſters are faultleſs in their conduct; they may, no doubt, err conſiderably in many circumſtances, even when their intention, upon the whole, is juſt and laudable. We ſee many examples of great imprudence, which we need not wonder at, when we conſider the difficulties with which they are every where

ſurrounded, and the enemies that wait for their halting. If we conſider that Moſes, the meekeſt man on earth, ſpoke unadviſedly with his lips upon great provocation, we ſhall perceive it is but a part of the weakneſs of humanity, when we ſee others fall into the ſame ſnare. But, as to laſting reſentment, he deſerveth not the name of a Chriſtian, much leſs of a miniſter, who will continue to harbor it in his breaſt; he muſt love his enemies; he muſt bleſs them that curſe him, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe him, and perſecute him. This is not merely a thing amiable and excellent, but of the moſt abſolute neceſſity; for our Saviour ſays expreſsly, "If ye forgive not "men their treſpaſſes, neither will your heavenly Father "forgive you your treſpaſſes." And, bleſſed be God, there is nothing difficult or burdenſome in this part of a Chriſtian's duty. There is no ſuch victory over evil, as overcoming it with good. There is no ſuch conſolation under the injuries of ſinners, as requiting them by prayer. It compoſeth the ſpirit; it purifieth the heart, and authorizes the believer to put his truſt in God, and ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxvii. 1. "The Lord is my light and my "ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? the Lord is the ſtrength "of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid?"

III. I proceed now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of this ſubject; particularly, by giving you my parting advices in the ſpirit of this paſſage, and to the beſt of my judgment, in a manner ſuited to your ſituation. But, before I do this, in the

1ſt Place, Let me beſeech every ſinner in this aſſembly, to hearken to the meſſage of the goſpel, and to believe in the name of the Son of God, "that, believing, they may "have life through his name." This is the ſubſtance of *the counsel of God*, "that Chriſt died on the croſs to ſave "ſinners, and that there is no ſalvation in any other." You are bleſſed who hear the joyful ſound, but infinitely more bleſſed, if you lay it to heart, and, renouncing every other claim, reſt your dependance upon this Saviour. What ignorance doth it ſhew, if you truſt in yourſelves, that you are righteous? Will you be able to ſtand before

God in judgment? It is to him you must answer, and from him you must receive your sentence. You may easily, indeed, stifle these reflections for a time, and bury every apprehension, in the hurry of worldly business, or the intoxication of worldly pleasure; but all these things are coming quickly to an end. After a few more turns in this vain world, the body must be laid in the dust, and the spirit must go to its own place; that is to say, either the mansions of glory, or the place of torment. I say these things to you, my brethren, with all plainness. They need no additional force of language to give them weight. It is an amazing proof of the deceitfulness of sin, that we are ever able to forget them. It is wonderful, indeed, that sinners are able to sleep in quiet, and to indulge themselves in worldly pleasure, while they are suspended by nothing but the frail thread of life over the bottomless pit. Gladly would I make use of every circumstance that could have any effect in carrying home these truths upon the consciences of all here present.

If that of my being now speaking to you, for the last time, in all probability, while in the body, can be of any use, I pray, let it not be forgotten. But is it not strange, that a circumstance of this nature should excite so much curiosity and attention, and things that happen every day, of the same or a like nature, should be so little improved? It is not, indeed, every day that a minister is removed from his charge; but there are not many days, in which some of his people are not removed from this state of trial. Many are hearing a farewel sermon, though not to the minister, yet to themselves, when they little think of it. I would, therefore, earnestly beseech all who are, or have reason to suspect themselves to be in an unreconciled state, to turn from their transgressions, that they may live; to lay hold of the mercy of God through Christ, for their pardon; and live, by faith, on his promised strength, for their sanctification.

2dly, Notwithstanding this general address, I have a few words to say to the loose and profligate. I am sorry to think, that, in a place like this, of no very great extent, there should be so many daring sinners, who set every thing sacred at defiance. It hath been observed, and I be-

lieve with truth, that the profane among us carry it with a greater degree of hardineſs and inſolence, than in places of ſuperior note, and where, probably, they are in much greater numbers. I believe it may be, in part, owing to this circumſtance, that they are better known; ſo that they muſt either be open profligates, or not profligates at all. There is no medium; the ſhame cannot be avoided: and, therefore, it muſt be overcome; ſince they will not be reſtrained, and cannot be concealed, it lays them under an unhappy neceſſity of keeping profanity in countenance. Perhaps alſo another reaſon may be, that, not being tied by any principle of conſcience, they are alſo deſtitute of that ſenſe of decency which has a conſiderable influence on the outward conduct of thoſe of higher rank. But, whatever be the reaſon, their ſtate is to be pitied. Let me beſeech all ſuch, to conſider the terrible effects of vice which are every day to be ſeen. Remember, I pray you, how many have fallen a ſacrifice to drunkenneſs and luſt! Can you ſay deliberately, in a ſober moment, that there is any profit in your choice? Is there any pleaſure in reflecting on ſcenes of riot and diſſipation? I know not whether to recal to your memory thoſe whom death has taken away, or point out to your obſervation thoſe who are ſuffered to remain. What a melancholy ſight is an old worn-out ſinner, who has broken his conſtitution, tainted his character, and waſted his ſubſtance! You let us ſee well enough in what manner you chuſe to live; but I would gladly know in what manner you chuſe, or indeed, in what manner you expect to die. You cannot live always. Some of you cannot live long. Suppoſe you had time given you for reflection on a death bed, or children to whom you would leave a few words of advice. Could you ſay to them, "O! my dear children, the many de-
"lightful nights that I have ſpent in roaring, and ſwearing,
"and obſcene jeſting! O the delicious hours that I have
"ſpent in brothels among harlots! It gives me pleaſure
"to think that you will follow ſo good an example, and
"revive the memory of your Father's conduct. Guard
"againſt every thing that may tempt you to forſake it.
"Beware of thoſe cunning prieſts that would ſeduce you

" to religion ?" Are such sentiments, my brethren, to the last degree, insupportable ? Are they almost improper to describe ? What then must be the life that lays an evident foundation for them ? Why are you so impatient of the reproofs or admonitions of those who bleed inwardly for your folly ? It is not inclination, but duty, that prompts us. No man would provoke your rage and violence, if he could avoid it. Think then, I beseech you, on your condition, and pray that God, for Christ's sake, may grant your repentance unto life.——The wicked having received warning,

I must now endeavor to execute what I chiefly intended in the close of this discourse, by giving you some advices, as a people making profession of faith in Christ, and obedience to him. They will all, or most of them, consist of what I have frequently taken notice of occasionally, and have now only selected as matters of general moment.

1. Let me beseech you to do your utmost to understand the gospel well; but let it be always accompanied with practice, and applied to promote the power of the spiritual life. I would have your taste exercised to discern good and evil. Endeavor, by reading, hearing, and meditation, and you may add mutual converse, to understand the doctrine of salvation, by grace, in all its parts. Learn to know the meaning of forgiveness being free, viz. that the sinner is justly liable to wrath; that Christ hath purchased, and God, of his infinite, unmerited mercy, has offered a full pardon to the chief of sinners, and grace to form them for his own service; that it is their duty to accept of it; that it is their interest to rely upon it; and that it is at their peril if they despise it. That for a sinner to think he must first do some things that are good, in order to found his title to this very mercy, is injurious to the riches of divine grace, and the way to retard, if not to prevent his reformation. The renewing of his nature is a part of Christ's purchase; and, therefore, not to be performed by him as a condition, but accepted as a promise; nor does he truly receive Christ for salvation, unless he receive and submit to him in all the characters with which

he is inveſted, as ſent of God, viz. Prophet, Prieſt, and King. Holineſs, or new obedience, is the fruit of faith. A real believer keeps the commandments of God by the ſtrength of that grace that is treaſured up in Chriſt, and watchfully obſerves his temper and practice, as the evidence of his change, and tending to ſhew that he is indeed an habitation of God through the Spirit. To have evangelical principles, is, by no means, to neglect the commandments of God; but to deny our own righteouſneſs and ſtrength, and obey, without glorying in that obedience. And that this is the juſt and ſcriptural view of the matter, I think, is undeniable, on this ſingle account, "that it is "God that worketh in us to will, and to do of his good "pleaſure." If every thing that is good in us is the work of God, it is abſurd to repreſent it as the condition of his favor; for it is the effect of his grace. By ſetting the thing in this light, we ſhall perceive, that the freeneſs of ſalvation, is not, in the leaſt degree, giving liberty to ſin, or taking away the neceſſity of holineſs. Is it not juſt as neceſſary, if it muſt be received as a gift, as if it were to be performed as a condition? Is it not juſt as neceſſary when incorporated with faith, as when divided from it?

This ſyſtem of goſpel truth, my brethren, I would have you to underſtand, ſo as both to diſcern and diſapprove what is contrary to it; but I would have you to underſtand it, in order to produce union with God, habitual and chearful obedience to his laws. In recommending the connection between faith and practice. I mean to guard you againſt two things diſtant from one another. The one is habitual untenderneſs of conſcience. There are certainly ſome who are either real, or at leaſt pretended friends to the doctrine of the goſpel, on whoſe hearts it never yet hath taken hold. They plainly and habitually live in the practice of ſin, and therefore are of thoſe who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs. I am indeed of opinion, that they never had any other than a cuſtomary traditionary belief. They are ſound becauſe it is the mode where they live to be ſound, and not from any inward perſonal conviction. In the mean time, they are a reproach to their profeſſion, and cannot be treated with too great ſeverity, by thoſe who wiſh well to the goſpel.

The other miſtake I would guard you againſt is, a ſpeculative religion. It is good to be well inſtructed in doctrinal truths; but there is often a danger of going too much into controverſy. We have ſeen many inſtances of ordinary Chriſtians, who, when they had attained a conſiderable degree of knowledge, and were able to ſpeak with fulneſs and propriety, on religious ſubjects, gave themſelves up to a litigious and wrangling diſpoſition, which was ſoon followed by a barren, and ſometimes an offenſive practice. The ſame thing alſo frequently leads to innumerable little parties and factions, into which Chriſtians, I mean real Chriſtians, are divided, which very much hinder their own profit, and grieve the hearts of thoſe who are one with them in Chriſt. Therefore let it be your care to apply the truths of the goſpel for your own ſanctification and comfort. After you have believed them, be ſtill more careful to live upon them, than even to defend them. Diviſions ſhould never be made without abſolute neceſſity; and when they are made, they ſhould be as ſoon as poſſible forgotten, that having eſcaped ſin we may apply ourſelves to duty; for controverſy, be the ſubject what it will, I think, is not very favorable to the power of godlineſs.

2. Deſire a faithful miniſter, do your utmoſt to obtain him; and then let it be your habitual ſtudy to profit by him. You have reaſon to be very thankful that your ſituation, in providence, is ſuch as you may expect a miniſter who is a hearty friend to the goſpel, and, at the ſame time, one who is agreeable to your own choice. Let me exhort you, as far as you are conſulted in that matter, to make the choice with much calmneſs and prudence; to look for one, not only ſound in his principles, but of thorough knowledge and capacity, always preferring ſolid before ſpecious parts. After having made the choice, endeavor to ſtrengthen his hands, and encourage his heart, in the Lord, by a careful attendance on his miniſtry, and by a dutiful ſubmiſſion to inſtruction and reproof. You ought not to wiſh for one who will flatter you, nor ought you to lay ſuch a temptation in a miniſter's way, as to ſhew that you are pleaſed with being flattered. The beſt

teſtimony that you can give to a miniſter is, to learn from him, and to obey him. This is infinitely better than noiſy praiſe and admiration, according to the excellent remark of biſhop Burnet, 'That it is not the beſt ſermon 'that makes the hearers go away talking to one another, 'and praiſing the ſpeaker; but that which makes them 'go away thoughtful, and ſerious, and haſtening to be alone.' Has a miniſter any evidently profane perſons among his hearers; if he cannot preach them from ſin to God, it were much more for his credit to preach ſo as that they are not able to hear him, but flee away for eaſe to their conſcience, than to have them continue in wickedneſs, and yet praiſe him every day, for an admirable ſpeaker, or an able man.

If you would truly profit by ordinances, after you have a fixed paſtor, I think it is of moment to forget, as much as poſſible, the perſons of men, and conſider them as no more than inſtruments in the hand of God, for your daily inſtruction and comfort. The more you remember the appointment of God, and wait upon his ordinances, in the faith of his preſence, and the expectation of his bleſſing, the more you are likely to receive both ſenſible and laſting benefit. I muſt therefore take the liberty to obſerve, that we have amongſt us a ſet of wandering unſettled hearers, who run about from one congregation to another, and even from one profeſſion to another, and are ſcarcely ever to be ſeen a whole day in one place. If they be but deliberating where to fix, we may ſay of them, that they are ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth. But the probability is, that they have itching and curious ears, and go about not to ſerve God, but to hear men. If I am able, at all, to judge, either by reflection or obſervation, thoſe are moſt likely to profit, who, having deliberately made their choice, ſit habitually and regularly under one miniſter. By theſe means they enter into his views; and as he will naturally endeavor, if any thing was wanting at one time, to complete his ſcheme by ſupplying it at another, they will thereby have a more comprehenſive view of the whole counſel of God. At the ſame time, not having the charm of novelty to enchant them,

they will have nothing to do but to reap inſtruction. On the other hand, by hearing ſeparate, detached, and independent diſcourſes, men may pleaſe their fany more, but they will improve their underſtanding leſs. It is alſo plain, that as every miniſter will endeavor, not only to follow an order in his diſcourſes on one ſubject, but to have a reſpect to the connection, and relation of the ſubjects themſelves, the more accurate and exact he is, in ſuiting one part to the illuſtration of another, the leſs he will be underſtood by theſe deſultory hearers, who take only a ſingle branch, without being able to perceive its ſubſerviency to the general deſign. I have many times known exceptions taken at miniſters, for ſome parts of a diſcourſe, by ſuch perſons, when, if they had heard the whole upon the ſame or correſponding ſubjects, they would have perceived there was no place for their objections. The great purpoſe, my brethren, of a ſerious and judicious people, in attending on ordinances, ſhould neither be to pleaſe themſelves, nor to criticiſe their teachers; but to hear the word of God, that they may do it. On this account it is, that humble and regular Chriſtians are getting real advantage to their ſouls, while ſome are only watching the opinions, or others only paſſing judgment on the ability, perhaps no more than the ſtyle, and outward manner of the ſpeaker.

3. I muſt give you another advice, as a profeſſing people, to guard againſt the introduction of a worldly ſpirit. I have often obſerved to you, that every ſituation a perſon or people can be in has its peculiar temptations, as well as trials. This place, engaged in commerce and traffick, growing in numbers, and I ſuppoſe growing in wealth, is in great danger of a worldly ſpirit, and of importing, if I may ſpeak ſo, faſhionable vices, inſtead of real improvements. While I ſay this, I would not be underſtood as being againſt a liberal education, and elegant manner of life, or any thing that is truly becoming in an advanced rank. There is no more religion in being fordid, than in being ſumptuous. But I think the ſpirit of the goſpel is ſuch, that it will diſpoſe a truly pious perſon to be rather late than early in adopting new ornaments;

rather ſparing than exceſſive in dreſs, furniture and equipage; and careful not to be conformed to that vanity of the world which we renounced at baptiſm. Let men defend one practice after another, as they pleaſe, I ſhall always expect to ſee ſomething which a careleſs worldly perſon will do, but which a good man will not do.

However, not to keep intirely in generals, I muſt once more give my public teſtimony againſt what was lately attempted to be brought in here, equally contrary to the law of the land, and the precepts of the goſpel, the pernicious entertainments of the ſtage. The beſt and wiſeſt men in all ages have borne witneſs againſt them, as the great means of corrupting the morals of a people; and I am certain, they muſt be of all others moſt hurtful to the inhabitants of this place, the far greateſt part of whom live by daily labor. I look upon it as the indiſpenſible duty both of magiſtrates and miniſters, to do all in their power, to prevent the introduction of what may betray the young and unſuſpicious into the deſtructive paths of vice, or the lower claſs of mankind into an idle and diſſolute life. Much good of this kind may be done in matters of outward order, by a firm and reſolute behaviour in thoſe who are in place and authority. I muſt alſo here take particular notice of the duty of ſabbath ſanctification. I do hereby warn you againſt that moſt pernicious refinement of gadding abroad, paying private viſits, upon the Lord's day. Whoever knows any thing of the obligation of family government and inſtruction, muſt be ſenſible that to receive promiſcuous company on that day, is to render it utterly impracticable. Beſides, the vain and unprofitable, and ſometimes ſinful converſation, that prevails in ſuch caſes, muſt greatly weaken, or entirely obliterate any ſerious impreſſions, made upon your mind, during the ſervice of the ſanctuary. Chriſtians, is not the reſt of the ſabbath, from worldly cares and purſuits, a conſolation to your own ſouls, as well as a happy opportunity of doing ſervice to the ſouls of others? Why then will you ſuffer yourſelves to be robbed of it, by the impertinent intruſions of idle or ill diſpoſed perſons? Let your houſes be ſacred on that day, as well as your churches; and endeavor to prepare your

minds, and those others members of your families, for an eternal sabbath in the world to come. This leads me, in the

4th Place, To exhort you to be careful and conscientious in family government, and instruction. How inexcusable are those parents and masters, who suffer their children and servants to perish for lack of knowledge? What unspeakable advantages do you enjoy, having all the force of natural affection, as well as natural authority, to give your instructions weight? How many have remembered, with pious gratitude, through a whole life, the benefit they have received from family instruction and example? I know I speak to many who are accountable to God for this mercy; how shall you answer it then, if you do not give the same advantage to your own families? And how shall they answer to God, think you, who have banished the worship of God from the families in which they found it? One would think, the lifeless walls and furniture of your chambers might be awakening monitors. There is the greatest mutual influence between family and personal religion. Personal religion is the foundation of all family and relative duties. It would be speaking to the deaf to persuade any to watch over the souls of others, who have no concern for their own. But where-ever there is a deep impression of the importance of eternity for ourselves, this will naturally and necessarily set before us its importance with respect to all that are dear to us. On the other hand, for the same reason, family religion is one of the best and surest evidences of the reality and the strength of personal religion. It is sometimes observed, that some very pious persons are extremely defective in this particular, and take little care of the instruction, and still less of the government, of their children. If they are truly pious, it is a very great blemish upon their piety. However, for my own part, I confess I do very much suspect the sincerity of religion, in those who are remarkably negligent in this particular, let them profess as much as they will. I know that pious persons, from the weakness of their judgment, will be guilty of great imprudence in the manner of family instruction, and from an absolute

incapacity, may not be able to preſerve their authority; but I cannot eaſily reconcile with true piety, the abſolute neglect of either the one or the other.

I muſt add, that I take family religion, and the careful diſcharge of relative duties, to be an excellent mean of the growth of religion in a man's own ſoul. How can any perſon bend his knees in prayer every day with his family, but it muſt be a powerful reſtraint upon him from the indulgence of any ſin which is viſible to them? Will ſuch a perſon, think you, dare to indulge himſelf in anger, or chuſe to be ſeen by them, when he comes home ſtaggering with drunkenneſs, unfit to perform any duty, or ready to ſin ſtill more by the manner of performance? When I figure to myſelf a maſter of a family, who had come home ſotted like a beaſt, and half-ſupported to his houſe, riſing in the morning, I am not able to conceive how he can bear the looks of thoſe members of his family who had been witneſſes of his ſhame. But beſides being a reſtraint from groſs crimes, I cannot help ſaying, that, ſpeaking of the things of God, with the concern of a parent, or the humanity of a maſter, muſt give a ſolemnity of ſpirit, and a ſenſe of their moment, even greater than before. A man cannot ſpeak to purpoſe, without feeling what he ſays; and the new impreſſion will certainly leave behind it a laſting effect. Let me, therefore, my beloved hearers, earneſtly recommend to you the faithful diſcharge and careful management of family duties, as you regard the glory of God, the intereſt of his church, the advantage of your poſterity, and your own final acceptance in the day of judgment.

5. Let religion be incorporated with your lawful employments, and improved by an attention to the whole courſe of Providence to you and yours. Nothing is more hurtful to religion, than to confine it to particular times and places: I ſhould have rather ſaid, there is not a greater miſtake in religion, than to imagine that it can be ſo confined. True religion will ſhew its influence in every part of your conduct. It is like the ſap of a living tree, which penetrates to the moſt diſtant boughs. In your ordinary calling, ſee that you undertake nothing but what

is lawful in its end, and endeavor to accomplish nothing by any but by lawful means, that you may have always the comfort of a conscience void of offence. Nay, you should even do more; you should endeavor to act so single and sincere a part, as to be beyond the imputation of fraud, that all who know you may put the most unbounded confidence in your integrity. There are many other calumnies which we may naturally expect from a malicious world; and it ought to trouble us very little to hear them: but it must be extremely distressing to a good man to be but suspected of dishonesty. Oh, my brethren! how often hath it grieved me to see, that many persons, formerly of a decent character, when they lost their substance, lost their religion with it; and, indeed, to consider how few, when they were reduced in their circumstances, could, satisfy the public that they had acted fairly.

Let it be your care, I beseech you, to remember, that it is God that giveth you power to get wealth; and what thanks are due to him, if he hath given you abundance, especially if he hath given you withal a heart to bestow. Be diligent in your business, from a principle of conscience; and make it the daily subject of your prayer to God, that he would either keep you from the shame of poverty, or, at least, from the sin of it. Take notice of every step of his providence, whether of mercy or trial. Let the aspect of providence direct your exercise, and quicken your affections in religious duties; and take such views of the fulness of an all-sufficient God, in acts of worship, as may prepare you for every event of providence, whether prosperous or adverse.

Thus, my brethren, I have now finished what I proposed, in the way of advices; and, for what I have to say with regard to the present dispensation of providence, that puts an end to my ministry among you, I shall bring it within very narrow bounds. It were easy, by saying a few words, to move the concern both of speaker and hearers: this I have hitherto chosen to avoid; and, therefore, shall only say, that I am deeply sensible of the affection and duty of the congregation that attended my ministry, and others under my charge. I cannot express my senſe

of it better, than in the words of the late eminently pious Doctor Finlay, my immediate predeceſſor in this new office, who, on his death-bed, ſaid to thoſe about him, 'I 'owe a long catalogue of debts to my friends, which will 'not be put to my charge; but I hope God will diſcharge 'them for me.' I cannot now do any thing better for you, than again to beſeech you, to remember and put in practice the directions I have given you, and, I am perſuaded, that it ſhall go well with you. The only further requeſt I have to make to you is, that you would give to me, and my family, an intereſt in your prayers. Intreat of God, that we may be preſerved from perils and dangers, and carried to the place of our deſtination in ſafety; and that I may be aſſiſted of him in every future duty, and not fall under the terrible reproach, of agreeing to make ſo diſtant a removal, and then being found unfit for the important talk. ——I conclude with the words of the apoſtle Jude, 24, 25. "Now, unto him that is able to keep you from fall-"ing, and to preſent you faultleſs before the preſence of "his glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wiſe God, "our Saviour, be glory and majeſty, dominion and pow-"er, both now and ever. Amen.

MINISTERIAL CHARACTER AND DUTY.

A

SERMON.

2 COR. iv. 13.

We also believe, and therefore speak.

TO underſtand what ought to be the character, and what principles ſhould animate the conduct of a miniſter of the Goſpel, cannot be without profit, even to a private Chriſtian. It will teach him whom to prefer, when he is called, in providence, to make a choice. It will teach him to hold ſuch in reputation for their office ſake, and to improve the privilege of a regular goſpel miniſtry, if he himſelf is favored with it. And I think it muſt incline him to make daily ſupplication to the Lord of the harveſt, to ſend forth faithful laborers into his harveſt.

But though there were no ſuch general advantage to be derived from it, my particular charge, and the very aſpect of this audience, would eaſily juſtify me in making this, for once, the immediate ſubject of diſcourſe.

Now, if we would know the character of a faithful miniſter, we cannot better, or more immediately reach our purpoſe, than by looking into the character, and obſerving the conduct, and ſprings of action, of the apoſtles of our Lord, who received their commiſſions immediately from

himself, and were not only the first, but the best and most successful Ministers, that ever were employed in the church of Christ.

The Apostle Paul, whose call was so singular, and whose labors were so distinguished, has, in his epistles to the several churches, planted or watered by him, given us a great light into the chief aims he had in the exercise of the ministry. In this chapter, and the preceding part of this epistle, he shews the Corinthians, with what visible faithfulness and sincerity he had acted, and what diligence he had used in promoting their eternal happiness.

To save time, I forbear going through the connection of his discourse, and only observe, that in the words of our text, he shows what kept him faithful and influenced him to so much diligence in the work to which he was called, by alluding to an expression in the 116th Psalm. It is written, *I have believed, therefore have I spoken. We also believe, and therefore speak.* In this he intimates, that our inward persuasion of the great truths of the everlasting Gospel, could not but have a powerful influence upon him and others, to press the important message, and watch over the souls of those committed to their charge.

In discoursing further at this time, I intend to confine myself to this single truth, which may be easily deduced from the text: That one of the most essentially necessary, and the most extensively useful qualifications of a good minister, is, that he be a good man, that he have a firm belief of that Gospel he is called to preach, and a lively sense of religion upon his own heart. After I shall have explained and confirmed this observation, I will conclude with some practical reflections.

Though I have mentioned real religion as one of the most essentially necessary qualifications, I am not ignorant, that taking the words in a strict sense, gifts are more necessary to the being of a ministry, than even grace itself. To make the efficacy of the ordinances to depend upon the inward state of the administrator, is a Popish error, and is expressly guarded against by the Assembly of Divines, in our shorter Catechism, in the following words:

The sacraments, and it is equally true of every other ordinance, *become effectual to salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them, that by faith receive them.*

But some degree of capacity is evidently necessary in the most absolute sense. A man who is altogether void of knowledge and utterance, or who is deaf and dumb, may be a saint, but cannot be a minister. This concession, however, takes nothing from the force of the observation, that real religion is of the greatest importance, and most absolutely necessary to the *faithful* discharge of a minister's sacred trust. That I may set this in as clear and strong a light as I am able, let me intreat your attention to the following observations.

I. Real religion in a minister will make him knowing, and able for his work. It is necessary for any one who intends himself for the office of the ministry, by diligent study, and the use of those means, with which God in his providence hath furnished him, to improve his understanding and acquire a stock of knowledge, that he may be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. In this he can have no such incitement as concern for his Master's glory. Nay, he that is truly religious, is taught of God, the best of master's, and will have some of his most profitable lessons from his own experience.

Let me the rather intreat your attention to this, that those who are most apt to disparage piety, are also apt to speak in terms of high approbation on the subject of literature and science.—Observe, therefore, that true religion serves both to give a man that knowledge which is necessary to a minister, and to direct and turn into its proper channel the knowledge which he may otherwise acquire. It is an approved maxim in every science, that practical and experimental knowledge far exceeds that which is merely speculative; at least, though the last may make the prettiest show, the first is by much to be preferred for use. Any wise man, if he was to go a dangerous

voyage, would readily prefer as his pilot, one who had much experience, and had failed often that way himſelf, to one, who had ſtudied navigation in the moſt perfect manner aſhore. So, my brethren, every man who regards his ſoul would chooſe for his *ſpiritual* guide, one, who appears to have the wiſdom to ſave his own, and would expect by him to be beſt directed how to avoid the rocks and ſhelves in his paſſage, through this dangerous and tempeſtuous ocean of life.

But if this maxim holds true in other ſcience, it holds yet more ſtrongly in Religion, which cannot be truly known unleſs it be felt. There is an inſeparable connexion between faith and practice, truth and duty; and therefore he that is a ſtranger to the one, is ignorant of the other. I am not inſenſible that a bad man may eſpouſe, and plead for a great part of the ſyſtem of divine truth; but as he cannot cordially embrace it, ſo I am inclined to think that he never truly underſtands it. The Apoſtle Paul declares, that it is only by the Spirit of God which is given to every real Chriſtian, and more eſpecially to every faithful Miniſter, that a man is enabled to treat rightly of Divine Things, *Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God; which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned.* As the real Chriſtian from that character is beſt diſpoſed to ſeek after, ſo he is by the ſame means beſt fitted to improve and apply his knowledge of ſpiritual things. This will appear, if we conſider what ought to be the great work of a miniſter. He hath to do chiefly with the hearts and conſciences of his people. His buſineſs is to convince the ungodly; to awaken the ſecure; to enlighten the ignorant; to direct and ſtrengthen the weak in the faith, and in general as a wiſe phyſician, to adminiſter the medicine proper to the various conditions and diſorders of his hearers. Now it muſt, at firſt ſight,

appear, that he who is a ſtranger to the power of godlineſs, and knows nothing of the ſpiritual life himſelf, muſt be utterly unfit for diſcerning how it thrives, or aſſiſting and promoting it in others. That man muſt ſurely be moſt powerful in ſearching, and moſt ſkilful in guiding the conſciences of others, who has been accuſtomed to examine and direct his own.

I only farther obſerve upon this particular, that true religion will purify, and direct into its proper channel, the knowledge he may otherwiſe acquire. It is a great miſtake to think, ſound learning is an enemy to religion, and to ſuppoſe that an ignorant miniſtry is the beſt or ſafeſt. There is no branch of human knowledge of which a Divine may not be the better, or which a good man will not improve to the glory of God and the good of others; though ſome of them are more important than others; and it is neceſſary to give to any of them, only ſuch proportion of our time, as is conſiſtent with our great and principal aim. Now true Religion is the great preſervative againſt miſtake or abuſe of any kind on this ſubject. A bad man is apt to ſtudy, merely to gratify his own fancy; and there is a falſe luxury and delicacy in feeding the mind as well as the body. A bad man is alſo exceedingly prone to intellectual pride and ſelf-ſufficiency; than which, there is not a vice more dangerous in itſelf, or more contrary to the character of a Miniſter of the New Teſtament. But he who is ſanctified by divine grace, as he has every motive to diligence in acquiring knowledge, ſo the ſingle purpoſe to which he will wiſh to apply it, is to ſerve God in the Goſpel of his Son.

II. Real religion in a miniſter will make him happy and chearful, ready and willing to do his duty. There is a great difference between the prompt, and ſpeedy obedience of a ſervant who loves his maſter and his work, and the reluctant labor of him who only deceives him, that he may eat of his bread. A truly pious man undertakes the office of the miniſtry from love to God, with a view to promote his glory, and what he hath counted his intereſt in the world: viz. the welfare of the ſouls of men. An unholy Miniſter undertakes this employment only as a

trade to earn by, and has it at leaſt as his higheſt aim to promote his own worldly advantage. It is eaſy to ſee in what a different manner theſe different perſons will act, and in what different light they will view the ſacred duties of their function. He who truly believes the Goſpel and loves its Author, will reckon it his higheſt honor when he is called to recommend it to the belief of others. He will be apt to teach, and will find a pleaſure in carrying his meſſage; beſides the reward he expects from him who employs him, and will undergo with chearfulneſs every fatigue he is ſubjected to, in the execution of his office. On the other hand, he who is actuated by a contrary principle, though he is obliged, that he may raiſe his wages, in ſome ſort to do his duty; yet how heavily muſt it go on, how tedious and burthenſome muſt it be, both in preparation and performance? He will count his ſervice at the altar, and his work among his people, as a toil and drudgery, and reckon all that redeemed time that he can ſave for himſelf, from the duties of his office.

Perhaps it may be thought that there lies a ſtrong objection againſt this obſervation from experience; as it appears that ſuch miniſters as have leaſt of religion, commonly go moſt lightly under the charge, and are far from feeling any burthen in what is committed to them; whereas the moſt pious and faithful miniſters ſeem to have a weight upon their ſpirits, and ſuch a concern for the ſalvation of their people, as cannot but take much from their chearfulneſs in the work to which they are called. In anſwer to this, obſerve, that an unfaithful miniſter is not eaſy and chearful becauſe his work is agreeable to him, but becauſe he takes as little of it as may be, and ſeeks his pleaſure more than his duty. Certain it is, that the work of the miniſtry muſt be irkſome and uneaſy to him that believes not, except ſo far as he makes it ſubſervient to ambition, and diſplays his own talents when he ſhould be feeding his people's ſouls. This I confeſs, which the apoſtle juſtly calls preaching ourſelves, may be abundantly gratifying to the moſt corrupt heart. On the other hand, that concern for his people which is upon the heart of every faithful paſtor, is far from being inconſiſtent with the

moſt ſolid peace and deſireable pleaſure ariſing from the diſcharge of his duty. It is like the exerciſe of pity and compaſſion to the diſtreſſed, in him, who is acting for their relief, which, though in ſome ſenſe painful, is yet accompanied with the approbation of God, and conſcience, as flowing from a rightly diſpoſed mind, and therefore to be cheriſhed and cultivated rather than ſuppreſſed. There is a time for every good man to mourn, and a time to rejoice, and perhaps the one is even more ſalutary than the other; for we are told, that God will appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, *to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

III. Real religion in a miniſter will make him faithful, and impartial, in the diſcharge of his truſt. The God in whoſe preſence we ſtand, and in whoſe name we ſpeak, is no reſpecter of perſons, and neither ſhould we be in doing his work. There is commonly a great variety of perſons, of different ſtations and of different characters, committed to the inſpection of a miniſter; the pleaſing or diſpleaſing of whom, has a conſiderable influence in his worldly eaſe and intereſt. This is a great temptation to be unfaithful, and often leads to ſpeak unto them *smooth things*, and *prophesy deceit;* or at leaſt, not to deal with all that freedom and impartiality, that his duty to God requires. In every unregenerate man, worldly intereſt in one ſhape or another, either vanity or gain, is the ſupreme motive of action: and therefore, as moſt men are impatient of reproof, it cannot be ſuppoſed, that an unſanctified miniſter will venture to provoke their diſpleaſure, or to gall them with unacceptable truths. The favor of the great, or the applauſe of the multitude, he certainly will ſeek, more than the edification of any. On the other hand, he who truly fears God and believes what he teaches, will act with faithfulneſs and boldneſs. He will remember that if he ſeeks to pleaſe men, he cannot be the ſervant of Chriſt. He will therefore no farther obtain, and indeed no farther wiſh to obtain their favor, than as a diligent diſcharge of his duty approves him to their conſciences in the ſight of God; or forces the approbation of the impar-

tial, notwithstanding the resentment of particular offenders. It is only the fear of God, can deliver us from the fear of man. I do not pretend that all who fear God, are wholly delivered from it: but surely, bad men, must be far more under the government of this sinful principle. The one may fail occasionally, the other is corrupted wholly. There are two reasons which incline me particularly to insist on that faithfulness, which can only flow from true piety.

1. That preaching, in order to be useful, must be very particular, and close, in the application. General truths and abstract reasoning have little or no influence upon the hearers, as the ignorant cannot, and the wise will not apply them to themselves.

2. The other reason is, that private admonition, and personal reproof, are a great part of a minister's duty, and a duty that cannot be performed by any man, who hath not a steady regard to the presence and command of that God, who hath set him to watch for the souls of his people, as one that must give an account.

IV. Real religion in a minister, will make him active, and laborious in his work. Diligence is absolutely necessary, to the right discharge of the pastoral duties, whether public or private. It requires no small attention and labor, to seek out fit and acceptable words, as the preacher expresses it, to stir up the attention of the inconsiderate, to awaken secure, and convince obstinate sinners, to unmask the covered hearts of hypocrites, to set right the erring, and encourage the fearful. An unbelieving minister, must be careless and slothful. As he is unconcerned about the success of his work; he cannot have any great concern about the manner of performance. But he, who believes the unspeakable importance of what he is employed about, both to himself, and to his people, cannot fail to be diligent. He knows that he himself must answer to God, for the care he has taken of the souls committed to his charge; and that if he does not faithfully warn the wicked to turn from their ways, their blood will be required at his hand.

Oh! my brethren, what a ſtriking conſideration is this, to ſuppoſe ourſelves interrogated by the Supreme Judge, concerning every ſinner under our charge? Did you earneſtly warn this unhappy ſoul, by earneſt exhortations in public, and by ſerious affectionate expoſtulations in private, to conſider his ways? It is an eaſy thing, by a partial, or curſory performance of our duty, to ſcreen ourſelves from the cenſure of our fellow-men; but to ſtand at the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, and anſwer there for our diligence, is a more awful trial.

Will not alſo a concern for his people's intereſt, animate a pious miniſter to diligence? If he is truly pious, as he loves God, he loves his brother alſo. The Apoſtle Paul ſays, *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we perſuade men.* If a man in good earneſt, believes, that everlaſting miſery muſt be the portion of all who die in an unrenewed ſtate; what pains will he not take, to prevent ſinners from going to that place of torment?

One who could ſee a fellow-creature, in the rage of a fever, ruſhing to the brink of a precipice, and not reſtrain him, would fall under laſting infamy. Muſt not the ſame compaſſion move the heart of a ſerious perſon, who ſees his fellow-ſinners, going blindfold to the pit of perdition?

It is their not believing theſe things, that makes them ſo fearleſs in ſinning; if you truly believe them, will you not make an effort to alarm them? There are no motives like theſe to diligence—he that believes, will certainly ſpeak.

V. In the laſt place, real religion, will make a miniſter ſucceſsful in his work. This it does, both as it fits him for doing his duty to his people, which has been illuſtrated above, and as it adds to his precepts, *the force of his example.* Firſt, it makes him ſucceſsful as it fits him for his duty. It is true indeed, that God only can give the bleſſing upon a miniſter's labors, and that he can ſave by many, or by few, by the weakeſt, as well as by the ableſt inſtrument: yet we ſee from experience, that in all ordinary caſes, he proportions the ſucceſs, to the propriety,

or sufficiency of the means. Neither is there any surer mark, that God intends effectual benefit to any part of the world, or the church, than when he raises, and commissions men, eminently qualified, to plead his cause. Therefore, real piety, even in this respect, contributes to a minister's success. If diligence in all other things produces success, it must be so also in the ministry. If he that lays out his ground with the greatest judgment, prepares and dresses it with the greatest care, has the most plentiful crop: if the shepherd that waits most diligently upon his flock, feeds them in the best pasture, and leads them to the safest shelter, has the most increase; then that minister, who does his duty most wisely, and most powerfully, will also see most of the fruit of his labors.

But real, and unaffected, yet visible seriousness, has also its own proper additional influence on a minister's success. An apparent and visible impression upon the speaker's mind, of what he says, gives it an inexpressible weight with the hearers. There is a piercing heat, a penetrating force, in that which flows from the heart, which distinguishes it not only from the coldness of indifference, but also, from the false fire of enthusiasm or vain glory. Besides all this, the example of a pious minister, is a constant instruction to his people. It ratifies his doctrine, while he not only charges them to do what he says, but to be what he is. This will receive much illustration from its contrary.

A minister who has a careless, untender walk, defeats, by his life, the intent of his preaching. Though in reason, it cannot justify any one in disobeying wholesome instructions; that the instructor despises them himself; yet it is one of the most common excuses men make for themselves, and few excuses seem to set their consciences more at ease. Loose and careless persons, think themselves quite at liberty to despise the reproofs of their pastor, if, while he teaches others, he teaches not himself.

Nay, not only is it thus with the profane, but even those who have the greatest regard for religion, are not so much affected with the same truths, when spoken by one they think indifferent about them, as when spoken by

one, who ſeems to feel what he ſpeaks, and who lives as he teaches.

Experience greatly confirms the whole of this reaſoning—for wherever an eminently pious miniſter has lived, and labored long, there is commonly to be found the moſt knowing, ſerious, ſober-minded, and judicious people; nay, the very memory of ſuch a miniſter, is often long continued, after he is gone, and his example is propoſed by his hearers, to their children's children.

From all theſe conſiderations, I conclude, that the moſt important qualification of a good miniſter, is, to be *a believing preacher*, and that, if he ſaves his own ſoul, he will be the probable mean of ſaving them that hear him.

I proceed now, to make ſome improvement of the ſubject.

Reverend fathers and brethren,

As we would wiſh our people to do, let us take heed how we hear, and make a faithful application to ourſelves, of what hath been ſaid upon the ſubject. Let it engage us to a ſerious examination of ourſelves, leſt while we preach the goſpel to others, we ourſelves ſhould be reprobates. This ought to be the ſubject of our frequent and ſerious thoughts, for ſeveral reaſons. We are in danger of thinking ourſelves too eaſily ſafe, by comparing that outward regularity, to which our office itſelf, even from ſecular motives, obliges us, with the licentious extravagance of profane ſinners. We are in danger of miſtaking our frequent thinking and ſpeaking of the things of God, in the way of our calling, for an evidence of true religion, in ourſelves. We may alſo, perhaps, miſtake thoſe gifts with which God hath furniſhed us, for the benefit of his own people, as the fruits of the ſpirit, and of gracious diſpoſitions in our hearts. A miniſter, is as much liable to ſelf-deceit as others, and in ſome reſpects, more ſo. We have therefore much need, often to make trial of our ſtate, as well as to give all diligence, to make our calling and election ſure.

But let us beware of imagining, that this diſcourſe is only applicable to ſuch, as have no real faith in Chriſt. God forbid! that there were any miniſter among us, a

complete unbeliever, counting the Gospel a fable. But faith, and every other gracious disposition grafted upon it, are capable of many degrees of improvement and strength; and in proportion to the strength of our faith, and the impression we have of divine things, will be our diligence, and consequently our success, in the work of the ministry. Let us therefore impress our minds, with a more and more lively sense, of the important truths which we teach and hear. Let us not starve ourselves, while we are feeding others: but study to arrive at a greater degree of love to God, and delight in him; a greater conformity to his blessed image, in purity of heart, and integrity of life. Let us in a special manner, study to attain to more and more intimate communion with God in secret, which is the sign of our dependance upon him, and the very exercise of love to him, which is the mean of constancy, and the source of joy in religion.

Above all, let us set our affections upon the things that are above, where our Redeemer sits, at his Father's right hand. As our profession is to be pilgrims, and strangers in the earth, to live by faith, and not by sight; let us study to raise our hopes of, and desire after, the heavenly inheritance. By this, we shall not only believe, but know, and feel the value of true religion, which cannot fail to make us diligent in seeking the good of others.

Oh! my brethren, what reason have we to be inwardly ashamed at the weakness of our faith, and the coldness of our love, as they show themselves, by our indifference in the duties of our office? We are often ready, both to complain, and wonder that our hearers are so little affected with the most awful considerations: that they can hear with indifference of everlasting happiness, and set without fear under the denunciations of eternal wrath: that we cannot persuade them, it is of importance to think what shall become of them forever. But is it not also to be wondered at, that we ourselves can often speak of these things with so little emotion? Can we ever be sufficiently affected with the danger of our hearers, when we consider, that we must either save them by convincing and converting them now, or deliver our own souls, by wit-

neſſing, juſtifying, and perhaps pleading for their condemnation at the laſt day? However plain and ſimple theſe truths are, of the final judgment of miniſters and people, they are quite unſathomable in their meaning and importance to both. It is ſtrange that we can think of them without the deepeſt concern, or even ſpeak of them without tears.

Let us pray that the Lord would increaſe our faith, that believing we may ſpeak, and that our ſpeech may be with ſuch efficacy, by the bleſſing of God, as many ſinners may be thereby brought to everlaſting life; that we may approve ourſelves to him that ſent us; and that when Chriſt, the chief ſhepherd ſhall appear, we may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

MAN IN HIS NATURAL STATE.

A

SERMON.

Rev. iii. 17.

Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

IN order to preach the Gospel with success, it is necessary that we should begin, by establishing the great and fundamental truths, on which all the rest are built, and to which they constantly refer. Nay, it is necessary, that we should often look back to these, and see that we be not off the foundation, or that it be not weakly, or imperfectly laid. Of this sort, I take the guilt, misery and weakness of our nature to be; and therefore have chosen the words now read, as the subject of discourse, in which the spirit of God reproves the sufficiency, and self-righteousness of the church of Laodicea.

Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased in goods, &c. I suppose you will all easily understand, that the words are figurative, and are spoken entirely, with a view to the spiritual state of that church. In this light, let us consider what is precisely their meaning.

We may either suppose, that this charge is brought against the church of Laodicea, because there were many

there, under the profeſſion of the Goſpel, who were notwithſtanding, ſtill in a natural and unrenewed ſtate—ſtrangers to the power of religion; of which, their being thus unhumbled, and inſenſible of their guilt, and miſery, was the evidence; and for which, the remedy is preſcribed, in the following words: *I counsel thee to buy of me gold, tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.*

Or we may ſuppoſe, that this reproof was in a great meaſure applicable to them all, in general; believers and unbelievers; the beſt of them being exceedingly prone to truſt in themſelves, that they were righteous; inſtead of that humble dependance on the merit, and grace of their Redeemer, which ought not only to be the refuge of the ſinner, but the confidence of the ſaint. And there is no queſtion, that this is a proper caution to profeſſing Chriſtians in every age, to beware of ſplitting on the rock of ſelf-ſufficiency.

But as this diſpoſition reigns in the heart of every one, that is yet at a diſtance from God—is the foundation of their ſecurity and impenitence, and is what they muſt be brought off from, before they can be reconciled to God; it is for their benefit, that I chiefly deſign this diſcourſe, though it may alſo be uſeful, and ſhall be in part applied to the children of God. It is an affecting thought, when purſued to its conſequences; yet alas! it is unqueſtionably true, that in every aſſembly, *such as this*, of profeſſing Chriſtians, there are not a few, who are in *the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*, under the wrath of God, and liable to the condemning ſentence of his law; and at the ſame time, that the far greateſt part of them are ignorant of it, and know not, that they are *wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

In diſcourſing farther upon this ſubject, therefore I ſhall

I. Endeavor to prove and illuſtrate this truth: that all mankind are by nature in a ſtate of ſin and miſery,

under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God.

II. I ſhall briefly ſhew you, that being brought to a lively ſenſe, and genuine conviction of this, is the firſt, and a neceſſary ſtep, to the ſaving knowledge of God, in Chriſt—And in the *laſt place*, ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. In the firſt place then, I am to prove and illuſtrate this truth; that all mankind are by nature in a ſtate of ſin and miſery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God. What is ſaid in this paſſage of the Laodiceans, is univerſally true, of the poſterity of Adam. Unleſs an inward and eſſential change has been wrought upon them by the grace of God; they are *wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* It is alſo true of them, as well as the Laodiceans, that they know it not; but vainly preſume themſelves to be rich, and increaſed with goods, and to have need of nothing. If theſe two things are jointly true of many of you my hearers, there is nothing in which you can have ſo great a concern: therefore, let me earneſtly beſeech your moſt ſerious attention, to what ſhall be ſaid: as the ſucceſs of this conviction is neceſſary, to your underſtanding, or profitting by any other part of divine truth, as I ſhall afterwards ſhew you.

The proof of the truth here aſſerted, can be only of two kinds. 1. From ſcripture, which is the teſtimony of God declaring it. 2. From the viſible ſtate of the world, and our own experience finding it to be ſo.

1. That all mankind are by nature in a ſtate of ſin and miſery, appears from the expreſs, and repeated teſtimony of the word of God. And this teſtimony we have, not only in particular paſſages, carrying the truth, but in the ſtrain and ſpirit of the whole, and the ſeveral diſpenſations of Divine Providence there recorded, which are all of them, built upon this ſuppoſition, and intended to remedy this univerſal evil.

See what God declares: Gen. vi. 5. *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually.* And again, *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* We may take the pſalmiſt David's teſtimony of himſelf, as a ſample, of the reſt of mankind; and indeed he plainly intimates, that it is a common calamity. *Who can underſtand his errors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults. Behold! I was ſhapen in iniquity, and in ſin did my mother conceive me.*

We may take alſo the teſtimony of the apoſtle Paul, in his epiſtle to the Romans, which is the more full to our preſent purpoſe: that as he had never been at Rome, he is there laying the foundation of religion in general, and the Chriſtian diſpenſation in particular, by a clear and explicit proof, of the need the world had of a Saviour, from its univerſal corruption and depravity. See then what he ſays—*What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wiſe, for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under ſin. As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one.* And again—*Now we know that what things ſoever the law ſaith: it ſaith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be ſtopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.—For all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God.*

You may alſo ſee that the apoſtle traces this diſorder, to its very ſource—*Wherefore as by one man, ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin: and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned.*

I ſhall add but one expreſs ſcripture teſtimony more.—*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.*

But beſides the particular paſſages of ſcripture, poſitively declaring this truth, the whole frame and contexture of the ſcriptures, and all the diſpenſations of Divine Providence recorded in them, are a proof of the ſame thing. Man is every where conſidered as in a fallen and ſinful ſtate. Every thing that is preſcribed to him, and every thing that is done for him, goes upon that ſuppoſition. It is not one man, or a few men, that are in ſcrip-

ture called to repentance, but all without exception. Now repentance is only the duty of a ſinner. An innocent perſon cannot repent; he has nothing to grieve for in his heart, or to forſake in his life. It is alſo proper to obſerve, that one of the ſcripture characters of God is, *Merciful and gracious, ſlow to anger, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin.* Now, he could not be to us a forgiving God, and there would be no need that he ſhould be revealed under that character, unleſs we were ſinners, that ſtood in need of pardon. Mercy, indeed, is the diſtinguiſhing attribute of God, and this can only have reſpect to offenders. All the other perfections of God, might be exerciſed towards pure and holy creatures; but mercy, only towards ſinners. He might be a good, holy, juſt, wiſe, powerful God, to perſons in a ſtate of innocence, but he can ſhew mercy, only to the guilty.

Do not the diſpenſations of God's providence, ſhew the ſame thing? He ſent the flood, as a teſtimony of the wickedneſs of the world, and for the puniſhment of a guilty race. Remember alſo the ſacrifices, which were appointed, and accepted by God from the beginning of the world. Sacrifices are for atonement, and expiation. They are plainly a ſubſtitution in the room of a forfeited life. It is doing violence to common ſenſe, to make them any thing elſe. The whole Jewiſh œconomy, which had in it ſo many ſacrifices, ſo many offerings, ſo many waſhings and purifications, does plainly ſuppoſe, the perſon uſing them, to be infected with ſin, or moral pollution. Had not this been the caſe, they had been extremely abſurd and improper.

But the ſtrongeſt teſtimony of all, that God hath given to the guilt and corruption of mankind, is his ſending his own Son into the world, to redeem them, by the ſacrifice of himſelf—To what purpoſe redeem them, if they were not in bondage? Why ſo coſtly an expiation, if our lives had not been forfeited to divine juſtice? But that it was for this purpoſe, that Chriſt came into the world, is ſo plain, from the whole of the ſcriptures, that I ſhall ſelect but one paſſage out of many, to prove it—*Whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his*

blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

What is said already on this head, is a full proof from scripture, that man is now, by nature, in a state of sin; that he is also, in consequence of that, in a state of misery, and liable to the wrath of God, is proved by many of the same passages, and by many others—*For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness —For the wages of sin is death, &c.* But I need not multiply passages to this purpose; for in all God's dispensations, the deserved punishment of sinners, is as evident, as their sinfulness itself. It is indeed fully proved, from the essential perfections of God, particularly his holiness and justice. He is of purer eyes, than that he can behold iniquity. *Evil cannot dwell with him, nor fools*, that is, sinners, *stand in his sight.*

Is not all this then my brethren, a sufficient proof, from the testimony of God, that man in a natural state, is sinful and miserable? Shall we affirm ourselves to be whole, if he saith we are unsound? Do we know more than God? Will we not give credit to the fountain of truth? Nor is it any objection to this, that we ourselves know it not, or are but little sensible of it. One considerable part of the disease, is blindness of understanding: so that we may, and must, till our eyes are opened, be ignorant of our danger —We may think and say, that we are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, while we are *wretched and miserable, and blind and naked.*

2. The same thing appears from the visible state of the world, and our own experience. Unbelievers are apt to hear with indifference and neglect, what they are told from scripture testimony, unless otherwise confirmed to them; and it is with the unbeliever we have now to do. Besides, the establishment of this truth, upon other evidence than that of scripture, ought to have a powerful influence, in inducing men to believe the other truths in scripture, that are connected with and founded upon it. I think it therefore, highly proper, to lay before you what

evidence we have of our loſt ſtate, from the obſervation of the world, though the ſcriptures had been ſilent. I would likewiſe recommend to all, what ſhall be ſaid on this ſubject, to preſerve your faith unſhaken, and keep you from blaſphemous, unbelieving thoughts, if at any time, you ſhould be tempted to them: ſince, even unenlightened reaſon, confirms the foundation of divine truth, and nature, and providence conſpire in preaching the doctrine of divine grace.

Now, doth not our experience, as well as the obſervation of others, ſhew us, that we are born in ſin, and conceived in iniquity? May we not ſay from our own knowledge, that the imaginations of the heart of man, are only evil from his youth, and that continually? Is there not a proneneſs, and tendency to evil, univerſally to be obſerved in mankind? and a backwardneſs and averſion to that which is good? Is not this apparent even in children, upon the firſt dawn of reaſon in their minds, and the firſt ſight of choice or inclination in their hearts? Surely it muſt be owned, that in that early period, they are at leaſt *comparatively* innocent—If any among us, is without ſin, it muſt be the youngeſt; *yet folly is bound in the heart of a child.* How hard is it to guard them from evil, and to inſpire them with good diſpoſitions, even by the wiſeſt, and earlieſt care, in their inſtruction? And even after the moſt ſucceſsful pains, are there not ſtill many remaining blemiſhes, through the prevalence of corrupt nature, which ſhew, that the ground-work itſelf, was faulty? But on the contrary, how eaſily do men learn, that which is evil? Do they need to be taught? Is it not enough to give them licence? How juſt is that deſcription in Jeremiah? *They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.* I am far from denying, that men are improved and forwarded in ſin, by inſtruction and example, as well as in that, which is good: but it is plain, they are far apter ſcholars, in the firſt, than in the laſt; which plainly ſhews, they are more powerfully diſpoſed to it, by nature. Nay, is it not evident, from the univerſal experience and teſtimony of thoſe, who act from a principle of Religion; that it is extremely difficult, with all the care they can take, to reſiſt the propenſity of nature, to the contrary? And

that in the beſt, it often gets the ſuperiority, when they are off their guard? Is not this an evidence of the depravity and corruption of human nature, and its tendency to evil? Are thoſe who hate ſin, often overcome by it, and ſhall thoſe who love it, preſume to ſay, they are free from it?

If any ſhould aſk, how I prove that that courſe of action, to which human nature is inclined is evil, without the aſſiſtance of ſcripture? I anſwer, from reaſon; and that many ways—from its pernicious effects on ſocieties, and private perſons; from the teſtimony of the world in general, when others, than themſelves, are concerned, and from the teſtimony of every man's conſcience, in his own caſe. Who is there, that does not often feel in himſelf, a powerful tendency to what he cannot but in his heart condemn? Is not his conſcience God's vicegerent? and doth not natural religion, as well as the religion of Chriſt, declare him corrupt? So that I may ſay with the Apoſtle Paul, not citing the paſſage as a proof, but as an illuſtration and deſcription of the character, and ſtate of natural men—*For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law: these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the mean while, accusing or else excusing one another.*

Thus there is as much light remaining with us ſince the fall, as to ſhew, that we are out of the way, but not to bring us back to it again.

As a ſerious conſideration of the ſtate of the wicked, may ſhew us our natural impurity: ſo it hath been long ago diſcovered, and confeſſed by many of the ancient heathens, who never heard of the name of Chriſt, nor knew of the remedy. Theſe, diſcerning by nature, the perfectly pure, and holy nature of God, and comparing it with the diſpoſitions prevalent in man, could not reconcile them together; but concluded, that a creature, ſo corrupt, could not come in that condition out of the hands of its Creator. This difficulty, ſome of them endeavored to ſolve, by a ſtate of pre-exiſtence; which bears ſome reſemblance to the true ſolution, given of it in the holy ſcripture: viz.

the apoſtacy of our firſt parents; which entailed a corrupted nature upon their poſterity, in which, the light of nature, and revealed truth, ſeem almoſt wholly to coincide.

It is to the ſame thing that I cannot help attributing the practice, that ſo univerſally prevailed over the heathen world, before the coming of Chriſt, *of offering sacrifices*, to appeaſe the wrath of the deity, ſuppoſed to be offended. That the cuſtom of ſacrificing, prevailed very generally, perhaps univerſally among the heathen nations, at the greateſt diſtance from, and having no correſpondence with each other, is a certain and unqueſtionable fact. Neither do I ſee to what cauſe we can aſcribe it, unleſs to one of theſe two; either an ancient tradition, from the beginning of the world, and ſpread with the inhabitants, through the ſeveral parts of it, as they ſeparated and peopled it; or to the common condition of human nature, which dictated the ſame thing, to perſons, in ſuch diſtant places.

If the firſt of theſe ſuppoſitions is embraced, which indeed I ſuppoſe to be the truth, it appears that ſacrifices were appointed by God to man, in his fallen ſtate, for the pardon of ſin, and that they had reference, to the great propitiatory ſacrifice of Chriſt, upon the croſs.

If we prefer the laſt ſuppoſition, it would ſeem as if the conſciouſneſs of guilt, had uniformly prompted men in all ages and nations, to offer up ſome atonement for their offences. In both caſes, it equally ſerves, to prove the corruption, and ſinfulneſs of human nature.

Now, as what hath been ſaid, plainly proves the impurity of man, in his natural ſtate: ſo his miſery and liableneſs to puniſhment, may alſo be proved; both as a natural conſequence of his ſinfulneſs, and even, more plainly, by itſelf. There is not only a conſiderable degree of actual miſery in the world, but plain preſages of more to follow it in the world to come. Need I take up much time, in enumerating the ſeveral miſeries and calamities incident to human life? Are not oppreſſion and injury from one another, poverty, ſickneſs, pain and death, the plain fruits of ſin, and viſible tokens of God's diſpleaſure? Man with ſome marks of ſuperiority and excellence of

nature, is even, by means of his ſuperiority, his knowledge, and foreſight of his own ſufferings, more miſerable, than any other of the creatures, that is equally ſubject to the ſtroke of death.

To the whole, I ſhall only ſubjoin one conſideration more, which is applicable to both parts of the argument—I have often thought, that the *natural terror and fear, with which men are poſſeſt of the preſence of God, or any remarkable token of his power, is nothing elſe, but an indication of guilt, or an apprehenſion of wrath.*

You may ſee ſome incidents in ſcripture, from which it is natural to conclude, that when God makes any viſible manifeſtation of his glory, or ſends any of his angels or miniſters from heaven to earth; thoſe who are preſent, are filled with the utmoſt dread and terror.

Thus in the relation given of God's appearance upon Mount Sinai, it is ſaid; *And ſo terrible was the ſight, that Moſes ſaid, I exceedingly fear and quake.* See another example, in Iſaiah—*Then ſaid I, woe is me, for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of Hoſts.* And in the New Teſtament, in the apoſtle John—*And when I ſaw him, I fell at his feet as dead.*

And is not this always the caſe, in all ages, that upon any remarkable appearance of an inhabitant of the other world, or even when any ſuch thing is falſely apprehended, the inhabitants of this world are filled with extraordinary terror? What is this do you imagine, but conſciouſneſs of guilt, and apprehenſion of vengeance?

Innocence has no enemy, and it has nothing to fear. We are all in much the ſame caſe with Adam, immediately after his firſt tranſgreſſion; when he heard God's voice in the garden, *he was afraid, and fled, and hid himſelf*—We read of no ſuch fear poſſeſſing him, while he retained his innocence, but as ſoon as he had ſinned, he began to dread an avenging God.

From all this then, I would conclude, that reaſon accords with ſcripture, in ſaying, that *all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God:* that man in a natural ſtate, is *wretched and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

AN INDUCEMENT TO COME TO CHRIST.

A

SERMON

REV. iii. 17.

Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

HAVING in a former discourse, proved, and illustrated this truth; that all mankind are by nature, in a state of sin and misery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God:—I proceed now to the *second thing* proposed, which was to shew you, that being brought to, a lively sense, and genuine conviction of this, is the first, and a necessary step, to the saving knowledge of God, in Christ.

On this, I shall not need to spend much time, as it is so exceedingly plain, both in itself, and from what hath been already said—It is however necessary to set it clearly before you, in order to lay a foundation, for the improvement of the subject.

If the doctrine of Christ, and of him crucified, proceeds upon the supposition of our sinful, and miserable condition by nature; then surely, it can neither be valued, embra-

ced, nor improved; and indeed, I think hardly underſtood, by thoſe, who know not this their natural ſtate. What Chriſt hath done, and promiſes to do in our behalf, is deſigned as a remedy, for our diſtreſſed condition; and therefore, till the diſtreſs is known, the remedy will be ſet at nought. If a phyſician ſhould offer his care and ſkill, for the recovery of a man, who eſteemed himſelf in perfect health, would he not deride the propoſal, ſo long as he continued in that opinion? If any man ſhould offer a charitable ſupply of clothes and food, to one, who imagined himſelf immenſely rich, and gloried in his riches; would he not look upon it, as the groſſeſt inſult?

Juſt ſo is the goſpel treated, by all ſuch as ſee not their miſery. What is the ſubſtance of the goſpel? 'To you 'O men, I call, and my voice is to the ſons of men. 'Behold! I preach to you Chriſt crucified, a Saviour, 'ſuited to your neceſſities, able to ſave, to the uttermoſt, 'all that come to God through him. He is well fitted to 'be a mediator, between you, and your offended Maker. 'He hath offered himſelf up, a ſacrifice to the juſtice of 'God, for your ſins, by the merit of which, you may be 'ſaved from deſerved and impending ruin. He offers 'himſelf as a guide, to direct your feet in the way of peace '—to ſtand by you in the difficulties and dangers to 'which you are expoſed, and to give you by his com-'municated ſtrength, a complete victory over all your 'enemies.'

What reply doth the unconvinced ſinner make, to all this? Why he ſaith, 'I know nothing of this miſery you 'ſuppoſe, wherefore then a Saviour? I ſee no ſin, what 'neceſſity then, for an atonement? I fear no wrath, 'therefore will ſeek for no Interceſſor. My eyes are open, 'therefore I will have no guide. I know of no enemies, 'and therefore, will not enter into contention with a ſha-'dow, or flee, when no man purſueth.'

Theſe my brethren, are either directly, or implicitly, the thoughts of men, in a ſecure, and unconvinced ſtate; and while they are ſo, they can ſee no form, nor comlineſs in the Saviour, nor any beauty, that they ſhould deſire him.

It is otherwiſe with the broken in ſpirit. He ſees his own vileneſs, and unworthineſs, and therefore cannot lift his eyes to God, but through the atoning blood of Chriſt. He fears the *avenger of blood*, and therefore flees to the *city of refuge*—The meſſage of the goſpel, is to him, indeed glad tidings of great joy, and he counts it a faithful ſaying, and *worthy of all acceptation.*

The juſtice of this repreſentation, you may ſee, from what our Saviour himſelf ſays, of the end of his coming. "They that be whole, need not a phyſician, but they that "are ſick: But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will "have mercy and not ſacrifice; for I am not come to call "the righteous, but ſinners to repentance."

See alſo the terms of his invitation. "Come unto me "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give "you reſt."

Appetite, and knowledge of neceſſity, is firſt required, or ſuppoſed, to the beſtowing of Goſpel bleſſings—"Ho! "every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters."

I ſhall only add, that we find by the inſtances recorded in ſcripture, of ſuch as were converted by the preaching of the goſpel; that their converſion, took its riſe, from conviction of ſin—"Now when they heard this, they were "pricked in their hearts, and ſaid unto Peter, and to the "reſt of the apoſtles, men and brethren, what ſhall we "do?" See alſo the inſtance of the jailor—"Then he "called for a light, and ſprang in, and came trembling, "and fell down before Paul and Silas: And brought them "out, and ſaid ſirs, what muſt I do to be ſaved?"

Repentance unto life, and the return of the ſinner to God, proceeds from the ſame cauſe, in every age. Who are the perſons who believingly apply to Chriſt for the pardon of their ſins, but thoſe who ſee they are undone without him? Who are the perſons in whoſe eyes he is moſt precious, and who maintain the moſt habitual dependance upon him? Are they not thoſe who have been moſt effectually humbled, and ſee their own inſufficiency for any thing that is good?

From all this I conclude, that none can come to Chriſt by faith, but thoſe who ſee themſelves to be *wretched, and miſerable, and blind, and naked.*

Let us now make some improvement, of what hath been said upon this subject, for your instruction and direction.

1. I would improve what has been said on this subject, for discovering the danger of many among us, who have never yet been brought to a just sense of their character, and state. Even the general belief, that such often have in the scriptures, may shew them what they have to fear. I might no doubt first of all observe, how very guilty and miserable those are, who are most notorious for sins, of the grossest and most shameful kind. But my subject leads me more directly to consider, who are in general, *unrenewed*, than to mark the several degrees of guilt in particular sinners. From the text therefore, and the illustration of it, I am authorized to declare to you, and *I beseech you to hear it with application;* that all such as were never brought to a real discovery, and inward sense, of their miserable condition by nature, are still in a state of wrath, and strangers to the power of religion, whatever may be their profession, and whatever may be their present peace. Oh! how easy is it, to lay asleep a natural conscience, and to keep a deceitful corrupt heart, in a state of ease and security? Some formality in outward duty, some moderation in sin, so to speak, the natural decay, and weakness of human passions, or youthful lusts, in a character, formed by human prudence, and regulated by health, credit or gain, is often made to supply the place, of a heart renewed by the spirit and grace of God. But consider, I beseech you, that though some may be ten fold more the children of the devil than others, yet all by nature, are the servants of sin; and "except a man "be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—It is not only such as are profane, or unclean; such as riot in brutish sensibility; such as are the plagues of human society; who live in brawls and contention; but all, in whom an essential change, has never been wrought, that are thus *concluded* under condemnation.

It is usual for men to take encouragement, from seeing others worse than themselves; and to consider all the threatenings in scripture, as levelled against the chief and

capital offenders; but my text is chiefly directed to such, as say they are "rich, and increased with goods." Can you say then, my brethren, that you have been brought under genuine convictions of sin? Have you been obliged to fall down prostrate before God, when sitting upon the throne of his holiness? Have you found the sentence of death in yourselves, and discovered no remedy but in Christ? If this has never been your case, you have reason to fear, that you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and in "the bond of iniquity."

But I must tell you also that this is matter of feeling, more than of profession. It is not enough to speak honorably of Christ, or of his works. Many do so, who never felt their necessity, or seriously and in good earnest, applied to him. It were a happy thing, if all among our hearers, who call for evangelical preaching, who quarrel with us when they think we do not preach the Saviour's cross—the lost state of man, and the doctrine of free grace, were experimentally acquainted with these truths. Many such, have only been accustomed to hear the Redeemer spoken of with reverence. They may be able to imitate the language of some of his servants, though they know very little of that brokenness of spirit, which accompanies true repentance.

But lest this should be in any measure mistaken, I must make these two observations—the *first* is, that a lively sense and deep conviction of sin, is, properly speaking, but a negative mark of true religion; giving us to know, that the unhumbled are yet impenitent. For it is certain, that many have been under very strong convictions, nay, have been driven to the very borders of despair with terror, who yet never were effectually changed, but stifled their convictions, and returned to their former security of heart, and carelessness of life.

Secondly, there may be some on the other hand, who are truly *born of God*, in whom the terrors of conviction have not been very remarkable. This happens most frequently in the case of those, who are called in their infancy, or earlier years, and who have had the advantage of a careful, and pious education. It would be destructive of

the comforts of God's children to lay down *one method*, in which he always proceeds. He is free and sovereign, in the manner of his dealing with sinners; and softens some hearts by kindness, as well as others by correction. So that if the end be brought about, we need be less solicitous about the steps of his procedure. Yet I think humility of spirit, is inseparable from real religion; and if it be less visible, in the anguish of repentance, it will be still manifest in the temper of the penitent.

II. Let me now, for the improvement of this subject, lay down a few of the best and most solid evidences of genuine conviction of sin. And,

1. It is a good sign that conviction is genuine, when there is a clear and deep apprehension of the *evil* of sin, as well as the *danger* of it. When the mind dwells not only on the atrocity of particular crimes, but on the aggravation of all sin, as such: When the sinner is truly offended with himself, for departing from his Maker's service; breaking his holy laws; forgetting or despising his innumerable mercies: there may be, and there is often an apprehension of suffering when there is little sense of the evil of sin: but the conviction is then genuine, when it makes the sinner not only remember what he has done, *but confess what he has deserved.*

2. It is a good evidence, when the sense of the evil of sin abides and grows, even though the fear of wrath may in a great measure have abated.

It is observable, that conviction of sin usually takes its rise from some gross or heinous acts, which first alarm the conscience, and in such a situation the attention of the penitent is fixed on nothing else, but the enormities of his life. If this view continues, and produces its effects, he is soon brought to see, and confess, the inherent vanity of his heart; the worldliness of his affections; and the unprofitableness of his conversation. It is a very common thing for persons who seem to have some sense of the commission of crimes, to have little or no sense at all, of the neglect of duty, and of living daily to themselves. It was a heavy charge, however, brought by the prophet

againſt Belſhazzar: "And the God in whoſe hand thy "breath is, and whoſe are all thy ways, haſt thou not glori- "fied." Wherever there is true repentance, though there may be the greateſt peace of mind, there will be alſo a deep and growing ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and the obligation of being habitually devoted to God.

3. It is a good evidence, when there is a continued and growing eſteem of the neceſſity, and value of the mediation of Chriſt. It was to ſave ſinners that he came. A ſenſe of ſin is neceſſary to our receiving him; and in proportion to its ſtrength, will certainly be our attachment to him. This indeed, is the great, and vital principle of the ſpiritual life—"I am crucified with Chriſt, neverthe- "leſs I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the "life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of "the Son of God; who loved me, and gave himſelf to "die for me."

4. The beſt and ſureſt mark of real conviction of ſin, is, if it leaves you poſſeſſed of a deep hatred, and abhorrence of it, and a daily ſolicitude to fly from it. Some may counterfeit a ſenſe of the evil of ſin, to their own hearts; may have a real fear of its bitter conſequences; and even a preſumptuous reliance on Chriſt for pardon; and yet may in ſome inſtances, adhere to the practice of it.

Floods of tears from ſuch a perſon, avail nothing: but he hath certainly, truly ſorrowed for ſin, who in his practice forſakes it; that is to ſay, he is not willingly ſubject to any known ſin—but ſays with Elihu, "That which I "ſee not, teach thou me: If I have done iniquity, I will "do no more."

III. Let me beſeech all ſerious perſons, to improve this ſubject for the trial of their ſtate. Examine, by the principles above laid down, the reality, and the progreſs of religion in your ſouls. Have you a growing ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and of your own unworthineſs?—This is at once an evidence, and a mean, of growth in grace. He that thinks leaſt of himſelf, is higheſt in God's account; and the more a believer increaſes in holineſs and real

worth, the more he increaſes in humility. As it is an evidence, it is alſo a mean, of further improvement; for he that hath the deepeſt ſenſe of his unworthineſs and weakneſs, will certainly live moſt by faith, in the merit and grace of his Redeemer.

Therefore, Chriſtians, try yourſelves by this important ſign. Whether do you, by religious duties, build yourſelves up on ſelf-righteouſneſs, or do you only learn by them, how far you fall ſhort of what is incumbent on you? What innumerable evils compaſs you about? and therefore how much you have need of mercy inſtead of reward? Do you look upon the works of righteouſneſs which you have done, as ſomething, by which you *merit* at the hand of God; or do you look upon them, as the *evidence* of his own work in you, and for you, and give him the glory, to whom it is due?

IV. I ſhall now conclude the whole, with a few directions for producing and preſerving this profitable ſenſe, and conviction of ſin. And,

1. Let me beg of every hearer, the ſerious conſideration of himſelf, and his ways. Many have no ſenſe of their ſinfulneſs, becauſe they have no knowledge of themſelves at all; but go through the world, in uninterrupted thoughtleſſneſs, and unconcern. Is there any thing of greater moment than the ſtate of your minds, and your hope towards God? Inattention, is perhaps a more univerſal cauſe of impiety, than high handed, and obſtinate profanity. Would you but ſeriouſly conſider your ways, and lay to heart the things that belong to your peace, I would count it a hopeful circumſtance; and expect, you would ſpeedily ſee your danger, and God in his mercy would lead you to the cure.

2. Give yourſelves much to reading, and hearing the word of God. The entrance of his word, giveth light.—It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and correction: but it is particularly neceſſary for *conviction*; for by the law is the knowledge of ſin. What wonder, if thoſe who never open a bible, and ſeldom enter into the houſe of God, ſhould be ignorant of their guilt and miſery? The word of God ſhews his right in you, pleads his cauſe, and

challenges your apoſtacy. It is exceedingly rare that thoſe who have fairly turned their backs upon God's inſtituted worſhip, are diſturbed in their ſecurity; but are ſuffered to ſleep on, till they ſleep the ſleep of death. But it frequently happens, that thoſe who attend ordinances, even from no higher principle than curioſity, cuſtom, or form, find that the word of God is *a fire and hammer*, that breaketh the rock in pieces: "that it is quick and powerful, "ſharper than any two edged ſword, piercing, even to "the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and joints and "marrow, and is a diſcerner of the thoughts, and intents "of the heart."

3. In the laſt place. Let me beſeech you, often to ſeat yourſelves, in the immediate preſence of God, or rather, frequently to recollect, that you can no where go from his ſpirit, or fly from his preſence. There is, if I may ſpeak ſo, a light and glory in the preſence of God, that diſcerns, and diſcloſes the works of darkneſs. We may often excuſe, or palliate our conduct to men, and even hide its deformity from our own view, when we could not juſtify it to ourſelves, if we reflected, that "it is open and mani-"feſt, in the ſight of God."—If therefore there is any thing in your practice, which you are inclined to palliate, and apt to excuſe—ſuppoſe, you were ſtanding at the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, where all of us ſhall ſhortly be; and think, whether your excuſes will then ſtand the teſt of his impartial ſearch."

"If our hearts condemn us not, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." It is therefore the duty, and intereſt of every ſinner, to take ſhame and confuſion of face to himſelf, and apply to the "blood of ſprinkling, "which ſpeaketh better things, than the blood of Abel."

TRUST IN GOD.

A

SERMON.

ISAIAH l. 10.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

IT is said of every real believer, that he walks by faith and not by sight. If this is true, it will follow, that his faith must be exposed to a variety of trials, while he continues in a world of sense. These trials arise from the state of his own mind—from his outward condition—from the state of the world with which he stands connected, and from the mutual influence of all these, one upon another. From this situation it is easy to see, that there are few duties, for the exercise of which, a good man will have greater or more frequent occasion, than that of trust and reliance upon God. Trust is the duty and the refuge of the needy—of the dependant—of the weak—the timorous, and the distressed. How many are included under one or more of these characters; or rather, who is it that can say he is altogether excluded?

Agreeably to this, we need but open the sacred volume, to perceive how frequent the exhortations are to trust in

God, and how many views are given us of his power, wiſdom, mercy and faithfulneſs, to encourage us to an unſhaken reliance. At the ſame time, I am ſorry to ſay, that there are few duties which are more imperfectly underſtood by many profeſſing Chriſtians. Even pious perſons often ſin both on the right hand and on the left, that is to ſay, both by diffidence and preſumption. I have, therefore, laid hold of this opportunity, and made choice of this paſſage of ſcripture, in order to open and illuſtrate a little this important duty of a ſervant of God. How ſeaſonable it is you will eaſily perceive, for in the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper we have ſet before us Chriſt Jeſus the unſpeakable gift of God—the great pledge of his love, and the great foundation of our reliance upon him, not only for his ſaving mercy in general, but for every neceſſary bleſſing in our way to eternal reſt.

This paſſage of ſcripture is alſo well ſuited to the ſubject. It was ſpoken to the Jews in a lax and diſſolute age, when many had turned their backs upon the ſervice of God—had deſerted his ordinances, and deſpiſed his ſervants, which is always an occaſion both of affliction and temptation to his own children. This appears from the firſt words of the chapter. "For thus ſaith the Lord, "where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I "have put away? and which of my creditors is it to "whom I have ſold you? Behold, for your iniquities "you have ſold yourſelves, and for your tranſgreſſions is "your mother put away." As alſo from the 3d and 4th verſes. "I clothe the heavens with blackneſs, and I make "ſackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given "me the tongue of the learned, that I ſhould know how "to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him that is weary."

In diſcourſing further on this ſubject, it is propoſed, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace,

I. To open a little the character and ſtate of thoſe who are called upon and exhorted to truſt in the name of the Lord.

II. To explain the duty of truſt, and point out the foundation of it.

III. To apply the ſubject for your inſtruction and comfort.

In the Firſt place then, I am to open a little the character and ſtate of thoſe who are here called upon and exhorted to truſt in the name of the Lord.

Their deſcription is as follows: "Who is among you "that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his ſer- "vant, that walketh in darkneſs, and hath no light? let "him truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay himſelf "upon his God." It will help us to enter into the ſpirit and meaning of the prophet's words, if we keep in view the ſtate of the Jewiſh church, hinted at a little while ago. "Who is among you;" that is, if there is one or more—if there is a ſmall ſelect number in the midſt of general corruption and depravity, who have kept their garments unpolluted, though iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold; "That feareth the Lord?" You know it is common in ſcripture to deſcribe religion in general by ſome particular leading branch of it. The fear of God is often made uſe of for this purpoſe, as in that paſſage, there ſhall be no want to them that *fear him*. It may, therefore, ſignify thoſe who have a ſincere and unfeigned regard to the commandments of God, and have choſen him as their portion and hope. Thoſe who deſire and deſerve to be diſtinguiſhed from the profane deſpiſer—the ſecure formaliſt, or the diſguiſed hypocrite. Thoſe, in a word, who are, and who deſire to appear, to uſe the ſtrong language of ſcripture, upon the Lord's ſide in every ſtruggle, and who reſolve with Joſhua, that whatever others do, for their part they will ſerve the Lord.

But I cannot help thinking, we may alſo, with great ſafety, explain the words in a cloſer and ſtricter ſenſe, and ſuppoſe, that by fearing the Lord is to be underſtood a due reverence for his infinite majeſty, a humble veneration for his ſacred authority. This is a moſt excellent fence or guard to the conſcience in an evil time, and a noble preſervative from the ſpreading infection and inſinuating poiſon of prevailing or faſhionable ſins. It is alſo the uſual character of a diſſolute age to have caſt off fear, to treat the moſt ſacred things with ſcorn, and to

look upon that holy ſolicitude to avoid ſin, which appears in the carriage and language of a child of God, as a mark of meanneſs or weakneſs of mind. In ſuch an age, one who fears God is well deſcribed by the prophet Iſaiah. "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and "of a contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word."

The next part of the character is, "and obeyeth the "voice of his ſervant;" that is to ſay, is willing to hearken to the meſſage of God, by the mouth of his ſervants. The words of the text, no doubt, may be conſidered as primarily referring to the inſpired prophets, who bore an immediate commiſſion, miraculouſly atteſted from God. Many, even of theſe, were ſet at nought, their meſſage derided, and their perſons inſulted, when they attempted to ſtem the tide of prevailing vice, or boldly denounced the divine vengeance againſt high-handed ſinners. But the ſincerely pious obeyed their voice. I ſhall make no ſcruple to apply this to ourſelves, and the preſent age. Our bleſſed Redeemer hath eſtabliſhed in his church a ſtanding miniſtry, and the regular adminiſtration of ordinances. And though we have this treaſure in earthen veſſels, yet in no other way doth he now communicate his will, and vouchſafe his preſence to his people, but by the reading and hearing of his word, and attendance upon his inſtituted worſhip. It will, no doubt, therefore, be a part of the character of a good man, that he will love the ordinances, and obey the voice of the ſervants of God, that he will conſider him who hath ſent them, and receive inſtruction, not as the word of man, but as it is in deed and in truth the word of God.

On the other hand, when iniquity prevails, when irreligion and profaneneſs lift up their heads, one of the moſt uſual concomitants, and one of the ſureſt proofs of it is, a neglect of ordinances, and contempt of thoſe who are concerned in their adminiſtration: How far this is at preſent the caſe, I leave to yourſelves to judge. While I ſpeak this, my brethren, I do by no means deſire to ſee an ignorant people diſtracted by the gloomy terrors of ſuperſtition, or led blindfold by the enchanted cord of implicit faith. But ſure I am, there is an extreme on either hand, and thoſe

who truly fear the Lord, will honor the perſons, and obey the voice of ſuch as plead his cauſe and ſpeak in his name. You may reſt aſſured, that though they neither deſerve nor claim any authority on their own account, yet ſo long as they ſtand in the divine councils, and ſpeak the divine word, their meſſage will be attended with this awful ſanction, "He that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me, and "he that deſpiſeth me deſpiſeth him that ſent me."

The laſt part of the character here drawn, which lays the foundation for the ſubſequent direction is, "that "walketh in darkneſs and hath no light." Darkneſs and light, beſides their literal, have often a metaphorical ſenſe in ſcripture. They are, indeed, uſed with a good deal of latitude and variety. But I think their metaphorical ſignification may be reduced to theſe two general heads.

1. Sometimes light ſignifies knowledge, and darkneſs ſignifies ignorance—as in Eph. v. 8. "Ye are ſometimes "darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord, walk as "children of light." Acts xxvi. 18. "To turn them "from darkneſs unto light, and from the power of Satan "unto God." Job xxxvii. 19. "Teach us what we ſhall "ſay unto him, for we cannot order our ſpeech by reaſon "of darkneſs."

2. Sometimes darkneſs ſignifies diſtreſs or trouble, and the correſpondent ſignification of light is deliverance and joy, as 2 Sam. xxii. 28, 29. "And the afflicted people "thou wilt ſave, but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that "thou mayeſt bring them down, for thou art my lamp, "O Lord, and the Lord will lighten my darkneſs." Job xix. 8. "He hath fenced up my way that I cannot "paſs; he hath put darkneſs in my paths." Pſ. xcvii. 11. "Light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the "upright in heart." Eſther viii. 16. "And the Jews had "light, and gladneſs, and joy and honor."

None of theſe ſenſes is to be excluded in the paſſage before us. Believers may walk in darkneſs, when ignorant or uncertain as to what nearly concerns them, as well as under diſtreſs and trouble. They have alſo a mutual influence upon, produce, and are produced by one another. For illuſtrating this a little more particularly, obſerve,

that a good man may walk in darkneſs, 1. When he is in doubt or uncertainty as to his intereſt in the divine favor. 2. When he is under the preſſure of outward calamity. 3. When the ſtate of the church is ſuch, that he cannot underſtand or explain, in a ſatisfying manner, the courſe of divine providence. Theſe particulars I have it not in view to enlarge much upon, but only to explain them ſo far as is neceſſary to lay a foundation for what ſhall be afterwards offered on the duty to truſt in God.

1. Then, a good man may walk in darkneſs when he is in doubt or uncertainty as to his intereſt in the divine favor. I apprehend that ſome meaſure of hope in God's mercy is eſſential to true piety, and not only the right, but the poſſeſſion of every child of God. Faith and deſpair are beyond all queſtion inconſiſtent. Faith and hope are inſeparable. Yet certainly the excellent ones of the earth may be ſometimes involved in great perplexity and doubt. This is plain from ſcripture examples, from daily experience, and from the nature and reaſon of the thing. How violent a ſtruggle do we often find the Pſalmiſt David in, between hope and fear? "O my God, my ſoul is caſt "down in me; therefore will I remember thee from the "land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill "Mizar." How many do we ſee every day under a ſpirit of bondage, who, though they ſtill cleave to God as their portion, yet are often full of fears, and ſeldom dare confidently affirm their intereſt in, or relation to him. And indeed how can it be otherwiſe? While we are here, our ſanctification is but imperfect; and alas! with regard to many, it is often hard to determine, whether we ſhould not write upon it, *mene tekel*, as eſſentially defective.

Sin ſeparates between God and his people, and cauſes him to hide his face from them. Nay, ſometimes, though there be no particular, or provoking crime as the cauſe of his controverſy with them, he may withdraw from them the light of his countenance, to exerciſe their vigilance, or to try their patience. I know, my brethren, that the diſtreſs of ſerious ſouls, when mourning after an abſent or an angry God, crying to him in ſecret, and following hard after him in his ordinances, is by many treated with the

higheſt degree of contempt. But ſurely, if peace of mind from a well-founded hope of the divine favor, is the greateſt of all preſent bleſſings: and if this, from the variableneſs of our own conduct, is ſometimes more, ſometimes leſs ſtrong, and ſometimes wholly ſuſpended. When this laſt is the caſe, it muſt occaſion inexpreſſible concern, and there can be no greater evidence of irreligion and impiety than to call it in queſtion.

2. A good man may walk in darkneſs when under the preſſure of outward calamity. This, in a real believer, is never wholly ſeparated from the former. Even in itſelf, indeed, no affliction for the preſent is joyous but grievous. The diſorders of this feeble frame, poverty and ſtraitneſs of proviſion, unjuſt ſlander and reproach, muſt be deeply and ſenſibly felt by every good man, even as he is a man. To this may be added, the loſs of relations, and concerns for the ſufferings of others of every kind, which is always moſt diſtreſſing to the beſt and tendereſt ſpirits. But outward calamities by thoſe that fear God, are felt moſt ſenſibly when they are conſidered as the rod of his anger, and bring ſin to remembrance.

When he viſits his own children with any of his ſore judgments; when he follows them with breach upon breach, they are ready to ſay, "Surely he is ſetting "me up as a mark for his arrows, he is counting me "his enemy."—They are often at a loſs to underſtand the cauſe of his controverſy with them; and they alſo find it often extremely difficult to bring their minds to a patient and ſubmiſſive reſignation to his holy will. To thoſe who know their duty, and deſire through divine grace to comply with it, it is no ſmall difficulty to be obliged to ſtruggle with a riſing and rebellious heart within, as well as ſuffering from without, and to be alternately calling in queſtion, the certainty either of the love of God to them, or of their love to him.

3. A good man may ſometimes walk in darkneſs from the aſpect of Providence, and the ſtate of the Redeemer's kingdom. The works of God are ſought out of them who have pleaſure in them. But when they are not able to penetrate the depths of the divine counſels, this be-

comes often a source both of distress and temptation. When wicked men are suffered to prosper at their will —when the good are oppressed by the power and tyranny, or persecuted by the malice of their enemies—when the most generous attempts for the revival of truth and righteousness are rendered abortive—when the professing servants of God are divided into parties, or marshalled under names, and their zeal made to spend itself in unnecessary, sinful and hurtful contentions—when offences come, and those of the highest profession or attainments are suffered to fall into gross crimes, by which the mouths of enemies are opened to blaspheme; then may, and must we adopt the words of the Psalmist—Ps. lxxiii. 10—14. "Therefore, his people return hither; and wa-"ters of a full cup are wrung out unto them: And they "say, how doth God know? and is there knowledge in "the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly who pros-"per in the world; they increase in riches. Verily, I "have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands "in innocency. For all the day long have I been "plagued, and chastened every morning."

I proceed now to the *second* and chief thing proposed from this passage, which was to explain the duty of trust in God, and to point out its foundation.

Trust, in the most general view we can take of it, may be thus explained. It is a reliance or confidence in God, that however discouraging appearances may be for the present time, yet, by his power and wisdom, our desires and expectation shall take place, whether as to deliverance from trouble, or the obtaining of future blessings. When we can attain this happy frame of spirit, it is an inconceivable relief and ease to the mind under suffering, and is excellently expressed by the Psalmist—Ps. lv. 22. "Cast "thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee, he "shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Let us then endeavor to explain the grounds of this as distinctly as possible. And God grant that it may be done not only in a clear, but in a solid and satisfying manner, so as to assist you in the practice of real and vital religion.

I have already said, that our expectation is from the power and wisdom of God. May we, then, reasonably expect, is it our duty to believe, that we shall receive all that we desire, and that is within the reach of divine power and wisdom? These have no bounds at all. We know that nothing is too hard for the Almighty. He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. This suggests to us that there is something more necessary, in order to lay a proper foundation for trust, viz. his goodness to make our expectation probable, and his promise to make it certain. Even created beings can often do what they will not. This holds particularly with regard to God, whose power is directed in its exercise by his goodness, and limited by his wisdom. His goodness, in general, encourages us to go to him with a peradventure, or who can tell whether he may not be gracious? But in order to make our trust both distinct and strong, we must go to his promise "for he is "faithful and keepeth covenant and truth for ever." Trust then, my brethren, rests ultimately on the promise. It must be precisely commensurate, or of the same extent with the promises. Whoever doubts or calls in question the certainty of what God hath promised, is chargeable with distrust; and whoever expects to receive, in kind or degree, more than he has promised, is so far guilty of presumption. This is the general rule, and I think it carries such evidence with it, that every one must be sensible it is just, who hath heard it with any measure of attention.

But the great difficulty yet remains, which is, to apply this rule to the various cases that occur in the spiritual life, and to tell any particular person what it is his duty firmly to believe, and hope he shall receive from God, and what it would be presumptuous and simple in him to fix his expectation on. This is plainly of the greater importance, that the more particular our trust is, as to the object of desire, it is the more powerful a support to the mind. At the same time it frequently happens, that the more particularly our desires are formed, the foundation of our hope appears the more uncertain and questionable.

On this account you may obſerve, that it is of the greateſt moment to underſtand the nature and tenor of the promiſes; or rather, indeed, to explain the foundation of truſt, and to explain the nature and tenor of the promiſes is one and the ſame thing.

For this end, it may be proper to diſtinguiſh the promiſes of God, as to futurity, into two heads, abſolute and conditional. By abſolute promiſes, in this place, I underſtand only thoſe that are ſo in the moſt unlimited ſenſe, that is to ſay, revealed as a part of the fixed plan of Providence, ſuſpended on no terms but what all, of every character, may expect will certainly come to paſs. Such are the promiſes after the flood, that ſummer and winter, ſeed time and harveſt ſhould not fail—the coming of Chriſt in the fleſh at the fulneſs of time, to the ancient Patriarchs, and to us—the downfall of Antichriſt—the preſervation of a church on earth, let its enemies be or do what they will—the calling of God's ancient people, the Jews, and the coming of Chriſt to judge the world at the laſt day. Theſe are all called promiſes in ſcripture, and ſo far as they can be of any uſe to the people of God, either for direction in duty, or reſtraint from ſin, or conſolation under trial, they are to be depended on, in the moſt abſolute manner, for they reſt upon the certainty of the holy ſcriptures, and the truth of the unchangeable God, who "is "not a man that he ſhould lie, nor the ſon of man that he "ſhould repent."

TRUST IN GOD.

A

SERMON.

ISAIAH l. 10.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

HAVING, in a former diſcourſe, opened the character and ſtate of thoſe who are called upon, and exhorted to truſt in the name of the Lord, and entered upon the ſecond thing propoſed; which was to explain the duty of truſt in God, and to point out its foundation; and having in this view conſidered the nature of abſolute promiſes—I proceed,

2. To conſider the nature and uſe of conditional promiſes. Theſe I am obliged, for greater diſtinctneſs, to divide into three different heads.—1. There are promiſes made to perſons of ſuch or ſuch a character, or in ſuch or ſuch a ſtate.—2. There are promiſes, the performance of which is ſuſpended on our compliance with ſomething previouſly required, as the condition of obtaining them.—3. There are promiſes, not only ſuſpended on both the preceding terms, but upon the ſuppoſition of ſome circumſtances in themſelves uncertain, or to us unknown. Let us conſider each of theſe with care and attention.

1. There are promiſes made to perſons of ſuch or ſuch a character, or in ſuch or ſuch a ſtate, which are, therefore, to be applied, and reſted on, according as the evidence of our being of this character, or in this ſtate, is clear or obſcure. In this I have particularly in view, the bleſſings of ſalvation, the pardon of ſin, peace with God, the ſpirit of ſanctification, and a right to everlaſting life. Theſe all lie in an unbroken chain, and inſeparable connexion, and might have been more briefly expreſſed, by an intereſt in Chriſt the Saviour, who is the author, ſource and ſum of theſe bleſſings; "for all the promiſes of God "in him, are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God "by us." Let no judicious attentive hearer be ſurpriſed or diſſatisfied, that I have ranked theſe among conditional promiſes, for you may obſerve that I have expreſſed myſelf thus, they are promiſes made to perſons of ſuch or ſuch a character, or in ſuch or ſuch a ſtate. In this, they certainly differ from the promiſes properly abſolute, mentioned above. It is far from my intention to do injury to that fundamental truth, that ſalvation is by grace. I eſteem that doctrine which proceeds upon a ſelf-righteous ſyſtem, to be contrary to the word of God, and moſt pernicious to the ſouls of men. There is nothing at all required in ſcripture to be performed by us, as a purchaſing or meriting condition. Every gracious act of the divine government, in our favor, is the fruit of the Redeemer's purchaſe, and every holy diſpoſition wrought in us, is the effect of his almighty grace. But it is certain at the ſame time, that in order to our accepting thoſe bleſſings, we muſt be truly and deeply humbled, and ſee ourſelves to be incapable and helpleſs. We muſt be unfeignedly willing to renounce all claim of merit, and accept of ſalvation as it is offered in the goſpel; that is, in its full extent, and in the free and ſovereign manner of its communication. So far, ſurely, we muſt ſay, the promiſes of the goſpel are conditional, or wholly pervert the word of God. I know of no promiſes then to the unbelieving and impenitent, unleſs you call that a promiſe, that they ſhall have "their "portion in the lake of fire that burneth with brimſtone; "and that the ſmoke of their torment aſcendeth up for ever "and ever."

Hear it, my dear brethren, it is the needy, thirſty, ſenſible ſoul that is invited to come and find reſt. "Ho! "every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters; and he "that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come "buy wine and milk without money and without price. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, "and I will give you reſt." If any ſhall think fit further to ſay, that the very deſtination of the veſſels of mercy, is of God's ſovereign pleaſure, that conviction itſelf is by a day of his power, and that faith which intereſts us in Chriſt's righteouſneſs is his gift: I agree to the whole, but obſerve that it is improperly introduced here. No uſe can poſſibly be made of the divine decree in the application of the promiſes. It is inverting the order things. Can any man ſay, I truſt in the mercy of God, becauſe I have been ordained to everlaſting life? No man can derive comfort from this, till by his effectual calling it is publiſhed, and begins to be accompliſhed; and then he may look back with wonder and gratitude to that everlaſting love, by which he was choſen in Chriſt, before the foundation of the world. Can you judge of the fruit of a tree by looking upon the root? No, but you judge of the ſtrength and deepneſs of the root, by the fulneſs of the fruit, and the vigor and verdure of the branches. From an improper mixture of what belongs to the ſecret will of God, and what belongs to us, as our duty, much error and confuſion ariſes.

Now, my brethren, as to the application of theſe promiſes of pardon and peace, the humbled ſinner, the man among us who walketh in darkneſs and hath no light—who is burdened with a ſenſe of guilt, and diſcouraged by the threatenings of the law, the accuſations of conſcience, and the pure and holy nature of God; who perhaps has all this aggravated by diſtreſs and trouble, is called to truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay himſelf upon his God. He is invited to conſider and reſt on the extent of the call, the immutability of the promiſe, and the riches of divine grace. If he is ſo far from pleading any merit in himſelf, or being diſſatisfied with the plan of ſalvation laid down in the Goſpel, that he is making every thing an argument

againſt himſelf, and dare not lay hold of, or appropriate ſo unſpeakable a mercy: This is juſt the effect of diſtruſt, and he is called, in the ſtrongeſt manner, in the text, to "truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay upon his God." With how many gracious aſſurances for this purpoſe is the ſcripture filled. John vi. 37. "All that the Father hath "given me ſhall come to me, and him that cometh unto "me I will in no wiſe caſt out." Heb. vii. 25. "Where-"fore he is able alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt that "come to God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make in-"terceſſion for them." Rev. xxii. 17. "And the ſpirit "and the bride ſay, Come. And let him that heareth "ſay, Come. And let him that is athirſt come. And "whoſoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." All things, Chriſt excepted, are to be renounced to the all ſufficiency of a Redeemer, to be the foundation of our hope. The penitent will ſay with the apoſtle, Phil. iii. 8. "Yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for the ex-"cellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord: "for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do "count them but dung, that I may win Chriſt, and be "found in him, not having mine own righteouſneſs which "is of the law, but that which is through the faith of "Chriſt, even the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith."

2. There is a ſecond claſs of promiſes, the performance of which is ſuſpended on our previous compliance with ſomething required as the condition of obtaining them. In theſe we are not only called to accept of the divine mercy, but commanded to obey the divine will. The order in which I have placed theſe, will, I hope, prevent you from miſunderſtanding or miſapplying what may be ſaid on them. This claſs includes all the promiſes in ſcripture regarding the daily progreſs of a believer in his ſanctification and conformity to God, as well as the increaſe of his comfort and peace. I am ſenſible, that as the reconciliation of a ſinner to God, and his right to what is called in ſcripture *the promiſe* of eternal life, is of free and unmerited mercy, ſo, no doubt, all the inferior or ſubordinate promiſes flow from the ſame ſource, nay, in a certain meaſure, they are entirely upon the ſame footing with

thoſe formerly mentioned; that is to ſay, final perſeverance, real growth in the ſpiritual life, and neceſſary comfort, are the ſure and purchaſed portion of every one that is born of God. Rom. viii. 29. "For whom he did fore-"know, he alſo did predeſtinate to be conformed to the "image of his Son, that he might be the firſt-born among "many brethren." But in the diſtribution of thoſe gifts, particularly in their meaſure, there is not only an unknown regard to the good pleaſure of God, but a known and eſtabliſhed regard to our conduct in duty. Thus the abundant ſupply of the ſpirit is the fruit and return of diligence in prayer. Matt. vii. 7. "Aſk and it ſhall be "given you, ſeek and ye ſhall find, knock and it ſhall be "opened unto you." See alſo Ezekiel xxxvi. 25. compared with the 37th. "Then will I ſprinkle clean water "upon you, and ye ſhall be clean from all your filthineſs; "and from all your idols will I cleanſe you," &c. Thus "ſaith the Lord, yet for all this will I be inquired of by "the houſe of Iſrael to do it for them." Thus alſo inward conſolation, as well as outward ſecurity, is expreſsly promiſed as the effect and reward of uniformity and diligence in duty. Iſa. xxxii. 17. "And the work of righteouſneſs "ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs quietneſs "and aſſurance for ever." As the counterpart and illuſtration of this, you ſee, that a departure from the path of duty brings on the threatened, or perhaps I ought to call it the promiſed, rod of correction. Pſ. lxxxix. 30—33. "But if his children ſhall forſake my law, and not walk "in my judgments; if they break my ſtatutes, and keep "not my commandments; then will I viſit their tranſ-"greſſions with a rod, and their iniquities with ſtripes. "Nevertheleſs, my loving-kindneſs will I not take from "him, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to fail." In the ſame manner, Iſa. xl. 30, 31. "Even the youths ſhall faint and "be weary, and the young men ſhall utterly fall: But "they that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength; "they ſhall mount up with wings as eagles; they ſhall "run and not be weary—they ſhall walk and not faint." Agreeably to all this, you know, our bleſſed Lord preſcribed watchfulneſs and prayer as the great preſervatives

againſt temptation, and whoever expects either ſpiritual ſtrength or comfort, while he relaxes his diligence in the way of duty, is guilty of that ſin, which is called in ſcripture, tempting God; and ſhall aſſuredly meet with a dreadful diſappointment.

My brethren, as much of the daily exerciſe of real believers regards their progreſs in ſanctification, and their peace and comfort, it is proper that you ſhould carefully attend to the tenor of theſe promiſes, and to what ought to be your reliance upon them. I ſhall ſum up, in a few particulars, what I apprehend to be of moſt importance.

1. Truſt in theſe promiſes implies ſelf-denial, and a deep ſenſe of your own weakneſs. Theſe promiſes would be unneceſſary and ſuperfluous were we not inſufficient of ourſelves for any thing that is good. Truſt in God ſtands directly oppoſed to all ſelf-dependance. Prov. iii. 5. "Truſt in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to "thine own underſtanding. How jealous God is, if I may ſpeak ſo, of the honor that is due to him in this reſpect, may be ſeen from the many foul and ſhameful crimes into which he permitted ſome of his beſt ſaints to fall, when they were off their guard, by ſloth, or ſtill more provoked him by pride and preſumption. Noah's drunkenneſs, Moſes's paſſion, David's adultery and murder, and Peter's denial of his maſter. 1 Cor. x. 11, 12. "Now all theſe things happened unto them for enſamples, "and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the "ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that "thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall." For this reaſon the apoſtle Paul ſays with great propriety, and with great force, which is equally applicable to himſelf and other believers, a ſeeming paradox. 1 Cor. xii. 10. "For when I am weak, then I am ſtrong."

2. As we are to put no truſt in ourſelves, ſo we are to exerciſe the moſt unſhaken confidence of our being able to diſcharge any duty or undergo any trial by the help of the Almighty.—Oh! how ready are we to ſin on both hands? How often do we preſume upon our own ſtrength and forget the neceſſity of applying for divine aid?—And on the other hand, how prone are we to timidity or deſpon-

dence in difficult cafes? When corruptions have long kept their ground, we are ready to dread their influence, and to make but little out of the promifes in fcripture, that we fhall be made "more than conquerors through "him that loved us." We have learned, by fad experience, that in us dwelleth no good thing, and yet it is long before we will attend to the leffon that follows hard upon it, "My grace is fufficient for thee, and my ftrength "fhall be made perfect in weaknefs."

3. As thefe promifes are expreſsly made to the diligent, you muft ſtill remember that your own attention and application to duty is eſſentially neceſſary, and that the aſſiſtance promiſed from on high, is always repreſented in ſcripture as an argument and encouragement to diligence, and not a warrant or excuſe for ſloth. Philip. ii. 12. "Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling, for "it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of "his good pleaſure." It is alſo well worthy of notice, that the ſame prophet Ezekiel, who ſays, chap. xxxvi. 26. "A new heart alſo will I give you, and a new "ſpirit will I put within you," changes the form of his expreſſion; and in another place, chap. xviii. 31, 32. ſpeaks in the following terms; "Caſt away from you all "your tranſgreſſions whereby ye have tranſgreſſed; and "make you a new heart and a new ſpirit; for why will "ye die, O houſe of Iſrael? For I have no pleaſure in "the death of him that dieth, ſaith the Lord God; where-"fore turn yourſelves, and live ye." In conſequence of this,

4. In the laſt place, truſt in God will make us ready to acknowledge, that when we fail in duty, when we forget or break our reſolutions, the fault is certainly in ourſelves. It is impoſſible to excuſe or juſtify ourſelves in any degree, without laying the blame, in the ſame proportion, upon God, and calling in queſtion his faithfulneſs and truth. But whatever our treacherous hearts may falſely ſuggeſt, we are not ſtraitened in God, but ſtraitened in our own bowels. We find him pleading his own cauſe, in this reſpect, in many paſſages of ſcripture. Iſa. lix. 1. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not ſhortened,

" that it cannot ſave ; neither his ear heavy, that he can-
" not hear ; but your ſins have ſeparated between you and
" your God, and your iniquities have hid his face from
" you, that he will not hear." Upon the whole, truſt in theſe promiſes is no other than an humble and diligent application to duty, under a deep ſenſe of weakneſs, and dependance on promiſed ſtrength, accompanied with a firm perſuaſion, that " in the name of the Lord we ſhall
" tread down our enemies," and go on from ſtrength to ſtrength, " till we appear before God in Zion."

3. Another claſs of promiſes are thoſe that are ſuſpended, not only on the ſame conditions with the two former, but upon ſome other circumſtances in themſelves uncertain, or to us unſeen. Theſe are temporal mercies or rather temporal proſperity, deliverance from preſent diſtreſs, and abundance or affluence of outward enjoyments. Perhaps we may alſo add ſpiritual conſolation, and ſenſible joy in God. I find no temporal promiſe preciſely fixed to the ſervant of God but this: " Bread
" ſhall be given him, and his water ſhall be ſure ;" and it is certainly his duty, in the moſt ſtraitening circumſtances, to maintain a confident dependance on the power and wiſdom of Providence for neceſſary ſupply. I do not condemn thoſe, who, when reduced to extremity, have actually pleaded this divine promiſe, and againſt hope, have believed in hope; and I am perſuaded, inſtances have not been wanting of relief, furniſhed in a manner next to miraculous. But as to every other degree of temporal proſperity, God hath reſerved it in his own hand to give or with-hold it at his pleaſure, that is, as he ſees it will be moſt for his glory, and the benefit of his people. It is lawful then, my brethren, for you to endeavor to procure, by honeſt induſtry, the increaſe of your ſubſtance, to look well to the ſtate of your flocks and your herds, and to aſk by prayer the bleſſing of God upon your labors. It is lawful, and it is your duty by regularity and care, to preſerve life and health, as well as to aſk of the Father of your ſpirits, recovery from ſickneſs, or deliverance from any other kind of diſtreſs. But you are not warranted to believe that theſe petitions ſhall be granted in hand, or in

your own time and meaſure, even though you aſk them in ſincerity with the prayer of faith. There may be reaſons for with-holding them, and yet you may be accepted in your prayers. An infinitely wiſe God knows beſt what is for your good, and he only hath a right to determine in what part of his own ſervice; where and how long he ſhall employ you. Truſt in God, therefore, in this reſpect, implies a careful attention to the tenor of the promiſes with regard to temporal mercies, and not to look for, or even, if poſſible, deſire what he hath not promiſed to beſtow.

If I am not miſtaken, we ſhall find it of moment, upon this ſubject, to obſerve, both what he hath not and what he hath certainly promiſed. He has no where promiſed that his own people ſhall be the richeſt or the greateſt on earth; but he hath certainly promiſed to bleſs their proviſion, and aſſurded them that a little that a juſt man hath, ſhall be better than the riches of many wicked. He has not promiſed that they ſhall be free from ſuffering; but he hath certainly promiſed to ſupport them by his own preſence under their diſtreſs. Iſa. xliii. 2. "When thou "paſſeſt through the waters, I will be with thee; and "through the rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee; when "thou walkeſt through the fire thou ſhalt not be burnt; "neither ſhall the flame kindle upon thee." The truth is, he hath promiſed that "all things ſhall work together "for their good." In one word, they have indeed all mercies promiſed, only they themſelves are not in a condition, at preſent, to judge what they may uſe with ſafety, and what not. As the heir of an opulent eſtate, though he is proprietor of all, yet is laid under reſtraint while in infancy and nonage, becauſe he would ſoon ruin himſelf if it were committed to his own management; ſo the believer, though an heir of God, and joint heir with Chriſt, yet till he is meet for the inheritance, he muſt be at his Maker's and Redeemer's diſpoſal. Take in, therefore, only this limitation, and then ſee his extenſive charter. 1 Cor. iii. 21. "For all things are yours; whether Paul, "or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or "things preſent, or things to come; all are yours; and

" ye are Chriſt's; and Chriſt is God's." What then is the duty of a child of God? It is to breathe after more and more ſubmiſſion to the divine will, and to annex this reſervation to every petition of a temporal nature, nevertheleſs, not my will but thine be done. And oh! my brethren, how happy the perſon who hath ſeen the weakneſs of human judgment; who waits the intimation of God's will, before he will ſuffer his deſires to faſten with eagerneſs on any earthly comfort, and who endeavors to keep himſelf free from perplexity, by an humble and ſubmiſſive reliance on the all-ſufficiency of God!

I obſerved in entering on this part of the ſubject, that ſpiritual conſolation, or ſenſible joy in God, is to be conſidered as a promiſe of the ſame claſs, which muſt, therefore, be aſked with ſubmiſſion, and is diſpenſed according to the good pleaſure of a gracious but ſovereign God. I am ſenſible, as has been formerly obſerved, with another view, that ſome degree of comfort neceſſarily follows from a believer's relation to God, but many pious perſons ſeem to deſire and to expect ſenſible comfort in a higher meaſure than God ſees it meet to give them, or, than is proper for them in the preſent ſtate. It is with ſpiritual proſperity as with temporal, every one cannot bear it. Therefore, it is our duty ſtill to be ſenſible that we have much more comfort and peace than we deſerve, and as we deſire and ſtrive for greater degrees of it, to accompany theſe deſires with much humility and reſignation to the will of God.

I proceed now to the laſt thing propoſed, which was to make a practical application of this ſubject for your inſtruction and direction.

1. From what has been ſaid, you may ſee what judgment you ought to form of inward ſuggeſtions, and ſtrong or particular impreſſions upon your minds. There are ſome extremely prone to interpret a text of ſcripture, ſuddenly ſuggeſted to their minds, or any ſtrong impreſſion made on them, as an immediate meſſage from God, to be directly applied to themſelves: Others, in oppoſition to this, as enthuſiaſtical and viſionary, ſeem to give up every expectation of being able to ſay with the Pſalmiſt,

"I bleſs the Lord who hath given me counſel, my reins "alſo inſtruct me in the night ſeaſon." I beg, therefore, that you may obſerve, that the ſuggeſtion of a paſſage of ſcripture, of itſelf gives no title to the immediate application of it, becauſe the great deceiver may undoubtedly ſuggeſt ſcripture, as we find he could reaſon from it in our Saviour's temptation. We are, in every ſuch caſe, to conſider the tenor of it, if it be a promiſe or encouragement, that is, how and in what manner it may be ſafely applied. If any thing happens to be ſuggeſted that expreſsly ſuits our preſent condition, either by ſetting home the obligation of duty, with particular evidence upon the conſcience, or pointing out the grounds of comfort, it ought to be thankfully acknowledged as from the ſpirit of God. For example, if a perſon, under the power of a ſpirit of bondage, and fear of divine wrath, hath ſuggeſted to him any of the extenſive gracious aſſurances of mercy to the chief of ſinners, it is his duty to lay hold of it. It is directly ſuited to his condition, and would be the very thing that a wiſe and judicious paſtor would recommend to him for his relief. He may therefore, without heſitation, bleſs God for it, if it is brought with power and efficacy upon his heart. In the ſame manner, if a perſon under trouble hath ſuggeſted to him any of the promiſes of ſupport under it, ſurely he ought, in the diſcharge of his duty, firmly to rely on the accompliſhment of that part of the word of God. But in the reflex examination of a perſon's character or ſtate, to apply the ſudden ſuggeſtion of a promiſe or privilege, perhaps of a conditional nature, is certainly both ſinful and dangerous. Sinful, becauſe without warrant; and dangerous, becauſe leading to deluſion.

2. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee what it is that we ought to ſeek for, with the greateſt earneſtneſs, and may hope to obtain, with the greateſt confidence. Recollect, I beſeech you, the order in which I have mentioned the promiſes of God as the objects of truſt and reliance. Firſt of all the promiſes of ſalvation, deliverance from the guilt of ſin, and a right to everlaſting life; next

whatever is neceſſary to the preſervation and improvement of the ſpiritual life; and then in the third place, proper accommodation, and ſuitable proviſion in our paſſage through the preſent world. They are here ranked according to their value in themſelves, and the value which we ſhould put upon them. Let us, therefore, take care that we never violate this order, which is neceſſary, not only becauſe of their comparative value, but becauſe of their mutual influence one upon another. It is in vain for us to expect to attain to the habit or practice of holineſs, till we are united to God by faith in Jeſus Chriſt. All the promiſes of the goſpel are ratified in him. All the divine fulneſs is treaſured up in him. Every divine gift is diſpenſed by him. Therefore, he ſays John xv. 4. "Abide "in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of "itſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, "except ye abide me." And the apoſtle Paul, Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Chriſt; nevertheleſs I live; "yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and the life which I "now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of "God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me."

In the ſame manner nothing can be more prepoſterous, than to fix our affections upon temporal mercies, or our attention upon the promiſes that relate to them, ſo as to loſe view of our intereſt in God's favor, and the progreſs of our ſanctification. All the temporal promiſes in ſcripture are made to the children of God as ſuch, and for carrying on the purpoſes of his grace in them.—Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of theſe things. There is no promiſe in the whole volume of inſpiration to the wicked and impenitent. "There is no peace, ſaith my "God, to the wicked." He will either rebuke them in his wrath and chaſten them in his hot diſpleaſure, or give them up to a curſed, hardening, ſtupifying proſperity, than which, no ſtate on earth is more to be dreaded.—Chriſtian! never ſuffer an anxiety about your outward ſtate to ſupplant or go before, or even to be ſeparated from a concern, that you may not be found wanting when weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary.

3. Let me beſeech you to adore the wiſdom, juſtice and mercy of God, in the order he hath eſtabliſhed, according to the different nature of the promiſes. That which is of moſt, nay, properly ſpeaking, of unſpeakable value, and radically contains all the reſt, is placed firſt in order, and offered in the moſt free and gracious manner, without money and without price. Salvation is preached to the chief of ſinners, and a Saviour held forth as able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come to God by him. Many uſes might be made of this, but the ſingle uſe I intend to make of it, at preſent, as connected with the duty of truſt, is to ſilence the complaints of envy and impatience. How prone are many to look with an evil eye upon the more extenſive poſſeſſions and greater apparent outward comfort which others enjoy? Does it not aſtoniſh you to think how much unbelief and ingratitude there is in thoſe repining thoughts? Meanneſs of rank, and poverty of ſtate, are no hinderance at all to an intereſt in Chriſt, and a right to everlaſting life. Nay, the goſpel is preached to the poor.—Many a Lazarus has been carried by the angels to Abraham's boſom, while the rich and luxurious have lifted up their eyes in torments. Will you, can you, dare you then complain? Will you envy the man of the world, his ſtately palace—his elegant furniture, and his ſumptuous fare? What is the ampleſt portion in the preſent life compared with the ſure mercies of David? What child of God would exchange with any wicked man a priſon for a palace, or a ſcaffold for a throne?

I beſeech you to add to all this, that, even with regard to preſent peace or comfort, there is no compariſon between a good man and a bad. "A man's life doth not "conſiſt in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſes." This is a truth not only often repeated in the ſacred oracles, but written in the cleareſt and moſt legible characters in the hiſtory of Providence.—Nay, even independently of virtue or religion itſelf, every human calamity, whether ariſing from ſickneſs, reproach, contention, fear, or ungratified deſire, rages with greater violence in the higher, than in the lower ſtations of life. A vain and conceited monarch once ſent to aſk at an heathen oracle,

who was the happieſt man on earth? and met with a deſerved diſappointment in the reply. If we ſhould put a queſtion much more profitable as well as much more eaſily reſolved, in what rank of life the moſt exquiſite human miſery has been found? I have no doubt but it ought to be anſwered upon a throne. Experience will always ratify the wiſe man's obſervation: *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a ſtalled ox and hatred therewith.* A ſanctified lot is an ineſtimable treaſure. The bleſſing of God on a cruiſe of oil, and a pot of meal, is better than inexhauſtible mines of gold and ſilver. What cauſe of contentment and patience to the child of God!

In the laſt place, you may learn from what has been ſaid on the ſubject, what is the plaineſt, the ſhorteſt, and indeed the only ſure way to deliverance from diſtreſs or calamity of whatever kind. It is to fly to the mercy of God through the blood of Chriſt, to renew the exerciſes of faith in him, and, in proportion as it pleaſes God to fill you with all joy and peace in believing; you will perceive every other covenant-bleſſing flow clear and unmixed from this inexhauſted ſource. It will lead to repentance, humiliation and ſubmiſſion. The ſanctified uſe of the affliction will be obtained, and this brings deliverance of itſelf; for no rod will be continued longer, than it hath anſwered its end. At any rate, when ſuffering is neceſſary, grace, to ſuffer with patience, ſhall not be withheld. Would you have any more, and is not this remedy always at hand? Can the pooreſt man ſay it is not within the reach of his purſe? It is, at once, effectual and univerſal. It was once ſaid in contempt of a worthy and pious miniſter, that he made ſo much of the blood of Chriſt, that he would apply it even to a broken bone. But bating what may be thought indecent in the expreſſion, choſen on purpoſe to bring a good man into ridicule, the thing itſelf, I make bold to affirm, is a great and a precious truth. Faith in the blood of Chriſt makes a man ſuperior to all ſufferings, It ſoftens their aſpect—it abates their ſeverity—nay, it changes their nature. When a man is under diſtreſs or calamity of any kind, and conſiders it only in itſelf, and independently of his relation to God, it retains its old

nature, and taſtes with all the bitterneſs of the original curſe; but when it is conſidered as limited in its nature—Its meaſure, and its continuance by a kind Saviour, the believer ſubmits to it with patience, as a part of his Creator's will; bears it with patience in his Redeemer's ſtrength, and ſometimes is enabled to embrace it with pleaſure, as ſerving to carry him to his Father's preſence. Is this going too far? No, my dear brethren; there are great realities to which the word of God, and the experience of his ſaints, bear united evidence. Many here preſent, I doubt not, have been witneſs of this truth, in the carriage of their relations now with God; and not a few, I truſt, will repeat the teſtimony to ſucceeding ages. I conclude all with that animated paſſage of the apoſtle Paul—2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. "For which cauſe we faint not; "but though our outward man periſh, yet the inward man "is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which "is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceed-"ing and eternal weight of glory."

On the PURITY of the HEART.

A

SERMON.

PROVERBS xxx. 7, 8, 9.

Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die: remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.—

MY BRETHREN,

OUR dependent condition as creatures, and much more our dangerous condition as ſinners, expoſed to daily temptation, renders prayer a duty of the moſt abſolute neceſſity. You muſt all be ſenſible, how frequent and preſſing the exhortations to it are in the holy ſcriptures. And, indeed, there cannot be a better evidence of a right temper of mind, than an habitual diſpoſition to the exerciſe of this duty.

But as prayer is a neceſſary duty, we ought to give the greater attention to the manner in which it is performed. We ought to aſk only for ſuch things as are truly ſafe and uſeful. We ought alſo to offer up our prayers with importunity, or reſerve, according to the nature and comparative importance of thoſe bleſſings we deſire to obtain.

All our wants are perfectly known to God; he is alſo the beſt judge of what is fit for us, and therefore, our petitions ſhould be well weighed, and expreſſed in ſuch terms, as, at the ſame time that they intimate our deſires, leave much to himſelf, as to the meaſure and manner of ſatisfying them.

We have an excellent example of this pious and prudent conduct, in the prayer of the prophet Agur, juſt read in your hearing. All his requeſts are ſummed up in two general heads. Theſe he ſeems to inſiſt upon, as abſolutely neceſſary to aſk, with that humble, holy confidence which is founded on the divine promiſe, that if we aſk any thing agreeable to his will, he heareth us. He ſeems alſo to aſk them, as what would fully ſatisfy him, and be ſufficient for the comfort of the preſent life, and the happineſs of the life to come. "Two things," ſays he, "have I required of thee, deny me them not before," or, as it ought rather to be tranſlated, "until I die."

Theſe two requeſts are conceived in the following terms. "Remove far from me vanity and lies, give me neither "poverty nor riches." The firſt, viz. "remove far from "me vanity and lies," evidently relates to the temper of his mind, and the ſtate of his ſoul. The ſecond, viz. "give me neither poverty nor riches," relates to his outward condition or circumſtances in the preſent life. There are two things in the general ſtructure of this comprehenſive prayer, that merit your particular attention. Firſt, The order of his requeſt; beginning with what is of moſt importance, the temper of his mind, and his hope towards God; and then adding, as but deſerving the ſecond place, what related to his preſent accommodation.

Secondly, The connection of his requeſts. The choice he makes as to his temporal condition, is in immediate and direct ſubſerviency to his ſanctification. This is plain from the arguments with which he preſſes, or the reaſons which he aſſigns for his ſecond petition. "Give me nei-"ther poverty nor riches, leſt I be full and deny thee, "and ſay, who is the Lord? or leſt I be poor and ſteal, "and take the name of my God in vain."

My brethren, I am perſuaded that this ſubject can hardly be, at any time, unſeaſonable to a Chriſtian aſſembly, as our miſplaced, exceſſive, and unreaſonable deſires are the greateſt enemies to our progreſs in holineſs, as well as to our comfort and peace. Perhaps, however, there are ſome circumſtances that render it peculiarly proper for this auditory. Young perſons are very apt to cheriſh vaſt and boundleſs deſires as to outward things; and having not yet experienced the deceitfulneſs of the world, are apt to entertain exceſſive and extravagant hopes. The truth is, rich and poor, young and old, may here receive a leſſon of the utmoſt moment.

Let me therefore intreat your attention, while I endeavor to open and improve this paſſage of the holy ſcriptures; beginning, at this time, with the firſt requeſt—— "Remove far from me vanity and lies."

In diſcourſing on which, I will endeavor,

I. To explain the import of it, or ſhew at what it chiefly points, and to what it may be ſuppoſed to extend.

II. Apply the ſubject for your inſtruction and direction.

I. I am to explain the import of the prophet's prayer, or ſhew at what it chiefly points, and to what it may be ſuppoſed to extend, in the petition, "Remove far from "me vanity and lies." The word *vanity*, eſpecially when it is joined, as it is frequently in ſcripture, with *lying*, or *lies*, is of a very large and comprehenſive ſignification. The word in the original, tranſlated *vanity*, properly ſignifies *lightness* or *emptiness;* and *lies* ſignify *falſehood*, in oppoſition to *truth*.

I imagine we ſhall have a clear conception, both of the meaning and force of this phraſe, if we make the following remark: God himſelf is the great fountain of life and exiſtence; the great I AM, as he emphatically ſtyles himſelf to Moſes; the *original* and the *only reality*, if I may ſo ſpeak. All other beings have only a dependent and precarious exiſtence; ſo that the creation itſelf, though his own work, compared to him, is vanity. "Vanity of va-

" nities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is va-
" nity." Therefore, in a particular manner, the word is often used to denote the folly of all idolatrous worship; or the giving the respect and honor to any thing else, which is due to God alone. " They have moved me to jealousy " with that which is not God, they have provoked me to " anger with their vanities. Are there any among the " vanities of the Gentiles, that can cause rain; or can " the heavens give showers, art thou not he, O Lord " our God?

Sometimes it is used to denote the *folly* or *unprofitableness* of any vice, and particularly of an ill-founded conceit of ourselves, as well as of all fraud and dissimulation, in word or action. So that this prayer for our souls, short as it appears to be, when considered in its full extent, will be found to contain a great variety of important matter.—This I shall endeavor to give you a brief account of, under the following particulars.

1. We are hereby taught to pray, that we may be preserved by divine grace, from all false and erroneous principles in religion; so as we may neither be deceived by them ourselves, nor any way instrumental in deceiving others. This, by what has been said of the use of the words in scripture, appears to be implied in the request, and it is of more moment than some are willing to allow. The understanding being the leading faculty, an error *there*, spreads its unhappy influence through the whole temper and life. Whereas, on the contrary, light in the mind, produces fidelity and security in the conscience, and tenderness in the conversation. You may observe, that through the whole history of the old testament, idolatry, or a departure from the knowledge and worship of the true God, is the leading sin, and the fruitful source of every other vicious practice. We sometimes, indeed, seem to stand astonished at the excessive proneness of the ancient Jews to this sin. But we need only a little reflection to discover, that an evil heart of unbelief continues the same at bottom, and daily produces the like dangerous effects. How prone have men been in all ages, to depart from the simplicity of the truth! In how many different shapes have they perverted it!

One age, or one country, has been polluted by one error; and another by an oppoſite; impelled by the unſtable and irregular fancies of men of corrupt minds. In the laſt age, the great theme of the carnal reaſoner was, to attempt to expoſe the ſcripture doctrine of God's certain knowledge, and preciſe ordination of all events; and in this, fate and neceſſity, have become the ſtrong hold of infidelity, and are embraced, or ſeem to be embraced, by every enemy of true religion without exception. Error, ſhifting its ground, indeed, is but natural; for lying vanities are innumerable; but the true God is the ſame "yeſterday, to day, and forever."

At this very time, how abounding and prevalent is infidelity, calling in queſtion the moſt important and fundamental principles, both of natural and revealed religion! And how properly is this deſcribed, by the expreſſion in the text, *vanity and lies;* for it always takes its riſe from the pride and vanity of the human heart? Sometimes a pride of underſtanding, which aſpires to paſs judgment on things far above its reach, and condemn things long before they are examined and underſtood: Sometimes, alſo, from a pride of heart, or ſelf-ſufficiency, that is unable to endure the humbling and mortifying view, given us in ſcripture, of our character and ſtate. Oh how readily do men turn aſide from the truth! With what greedineſs do they drink in the flattering but deſtructive poiſon! Need I point out to you the fatal effects of ſuch principles taking place? It looſens the obligations to obedience, takes off the edge of the reproofs of conſcience, and thus removing reſtraints, leaves men, in the emphatical language of the holy ſcripture, "to walk in the ways of their own hearts, "and in the ſight of their own eyes."

But in this requeſt, "remove far from me vanity and "lies," I would not have you confine your views to the moſt groſs infidelity and avowed oppoſition to God. Pray alſo, that you may be preſerved from error, or miſtake of any kind; but eſpecially ſuch as have the greateſt influence on the ſubſtance of religion.

A clear apprehenſion of the holy nature, and righteous government of God—the infinite evil of ſin—the founda-

tion of our peace in the blood of the atonement—and the renewing of our natures by the Holy Ghoſt, ſeem to me abſolutely neceſſary to true and undefiled religion. And they are the truths, which particularly ſerve to exalt the Creator, and lay the creature in the duſt. When, therefore, we conſider how grateful to corrupt nature every thing is, that tends to foſter pride—to create ſecurity, and ſet the mind at eaſe, in the indulgence of ſin: we muſt be ſenſible of how great importance it is, to pray for divine direction, and divine preſervation. Nothing is more dangerous to men than confidence and preſumption—nothing more uſeful in faith and practice, than humility and ſelf-denial.

2. This prayer implies, a deſire that we may be preſerved from ſetting our affections on ſuch objects, as are but vain and unſatisfying, and will, in the end, diſappoint our expectation. I take this to be not only a part, but a very important part of the prophet's meaning. The world is the great ſource of temptation; the powerful and unhappy influence of which we may daily ſee; or rather, all of us daily and ſenſibly feel. What is it poſſeſſes the fancy, miſleads the judgment, inflames the affections, conſumes the time, and ruins the ſoul, but theſe preſent enjoyments, of which the wiſeſt of men, after a full trial of them, hath left us their character *vanity of vanities*.

I am ſenſible that I have now entered upon a ſubject, which is far from being difficult to enlarge upon, and yet perhaps, very difficult to treat with propriety, or in ſuch a manner, as to have the intended effect. There is nothing more eaſy than, in a bold declamatory way, to draw pictures of the vanity of human life. It hath been done by thouſands, when, after all their broken ſchemes, and diſappointed views, they have juſt ſuffered ſhipwreck upon the coaſt of the enchanted land of hope. But from ſuch men we may expect to hear the language of deſpair, rather than of experience; and as it is too late for the inſtruction of the ſufferers, ſo it very rarely has any effect in warning others to avoid the danger. What I would, therefore, willingly attempt, is, to conſider this matter in a ſober ſcriptural light; if ſo be, that it may pleaſe God

to carry conviction to our hearts, and make it truly useful, both to speaker and hearers.

Let me, therefore, my brethren, point out to you, precisely, wherein the vanity of the world lieth. The world, in itself, is the workmanship of God, and every thing that is done in it, is by the ordination, or permission of God. As such, it is good, and may be used in subserviency to his honor, and our own peace. But through the corruption of our nature, the creature becomes the rival and competitor of the Creator for our hearts.—When we place our supreme happiness upon it, instead of making it a mean of leading us to God, then its inherent vanity immediately appears.—When men allow themselves in the indulgence of vicious pleasures, how justly may they be called *vanity and lies?* They are smiling and inviting to appearance, but how dreadful and destructive in their effects? "Whoredom and wine, and new wine taketh "away the heart." Those who refuse to be confined by the laws of piety and sobriety, *vainly* think they are walking at liberty, when they are bringing themselves into subjection to the severest and most inflexible of all masters. Read the just and striking description, by Solomon, of the effects of whoredom: and reflect on the innumerable calamities brought, in every age, on persons and families by unbridled lust. See also the effects of intemperance and excess—"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, "and whosever is deceived thereby is not wise." And again: "the drunkard and glutton shall come to poverty. "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth "its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright; at "last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

Think on the unhappy consequences, of dishonesty and fraud. "Bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but after-"wards his mouth shall be filled with gravel."—You may also see, in innumerable passages of scripture, that oppression of others, as it is a sin of the deepest dye, so it is often remarkably overtaken, and punished in the course of Providence, even in the present life. "Envy thou not the "oppressor, and choose none of his ways; for the froward "is abomination to the Lord, but his secret is with the

" righteous. The curſe of the Lord is in the houſe of the " wicked, but he bleſſeth the habitation of the juſt."

But there is ſomething more in this requeſt, than being preſerved from practices directly vicious; for the ſetting of our hearts upon worldly things, and making them our chief portion and delight, is certainly ſeeking after vanity and lies. They are far from affording that happineſs and peace, which we demand of them, and expect from them. " A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the " riches of many wicked." Can there be any thing more comfortable to experience, than that ſtrong expreſſion— " Thou prepareſt a table for me in the preſence of mine " enemies, thou anointeſt my head with oil, my cup run- " neth over." You may elſe find in the word of God, many warnings of the folly of thoſe, who travel in the path of ambition, and put their truſt in man. " Surely " men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree " are a lie. Put not your truſt in princes, nor in the ſon " of man, in whom there is no help. Happy is he that " hath the God of Jacob for his help, whoſe hope is in the " Lord his God." But the moſt comprehenſive remark of all, upon this ſubject is, that human life itſelf is ſo exceedingly precarious, that it muſt write 'vanity and 'emptineſs' on every thing, the poſſeſſion and uſe of which is confined to the preſent ſtate. " Behold thou haſt " made my days as an hand-breadth." What a ſtriking picture does our Lord draw of the vanity of human happineſs, in that parable of the ground of the rich man, which brought forth plentifully? " And he thought with- " in himſelf, ſaying, what ſhall I do, becauſe I have no " room where to beſtow my fruits?"—And while this man is ſedulouſly employed in making proviſion for a long and happy life, 'God ſaid unto him, thou fool, this night " ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee, then whoſe ſhall thoſe " things be, which thou haſt provided?"

The whole of the preceding repreſentation may be ſummed up in this excellent ſentence of the wiſe man: "The " wicked worketh a deceitful work; but to him that ſow- " eth righteouſly ſhall be a ſure reward."

Now, my brethren, need I add, how prone we are to be led aſtray, in a greater or leſs degree, by ſuch "vanity "and lies?"—I do not inſiſt upon the many victims, which, in every age, have been ſeen to fall by the deſtructive hand of vice. How many have been ruined by luſt, ſlain by intemperance, or beggared by diſhoneſty! But I intreat you particularly to obſerve, that when we ſet our affections immoderately upon any earthly object or enjoyment, or when they are not truly ſanctified; how much they diſappoint our expectation in poſſeſſion, and what ſcenes of diſtreſs we prepare for ourſelves by their removal.

3. This requeſt, "remove far from me vanity and lies," implies, that God would graciouſly preſerve us from deceiving ourſelves, and thinking our character better, and our ſtate ſafer than it really is. When we take a view of the ſtate of the world, and the conduct of thoſe who have not yet caſt off all belief of eternity, and a judgment to come, it is impoſſible to account for their ſecurity, but by a great degree of ſelf-deceit. We may ſay of them with the prophet Iſaiah, "He feedeth of aſhes; a deceived heart "hath turned him aſide, that he cannot deliver his ſoul, "nor ſay, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" And from the repreſentation given by our Saviour, it is plain, that many ſhall continue in their miſtake, and only be undeceived at the laſt day. "Not every one that ſaith unto "me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven." How awful a reflection this! How dreadful a diſappointment to diſcover our miſery, only when there is no more hope of eſcaping it! Is there not a poſſibility of this being the caſe with many of you, my brethren; and do you not tremble at the thought? I would not wiſh any, in general, to give way to a ſpirit of bondage, or ſlaviſh fear; but the beſt of the children of God have often diſcovered this holy jealouſy of themſelves. "Who can underſtand "his errors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults. Keep "back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins; let them "not have dominion over me, then ſhall I be upright, and "I ſhall be innocent from the great tranſgreſſion." And again; "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me,

" and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked " way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

This leads me naturally to add upon this subject, that we ought to pray for preservation from self-deceit, as to particular branches of our character and conduct, as well as our general state.—Many, even upon the whole good men, are occasionally and insensibly brought, for a season, under the direction of sinful passions. They may be indulging themselves without suspicion, in what is, notwithstanding, really provoking to God, injurious or offensive to others, and, in the issue, hurtful to their own peace. They may be making an enjoyment a talent, a relation an idol, when they think they are keeping within the bounds of duty. They may be indulging a sinful resentment, when they think they are promoting the glory of God. Many an excuse for neglecting commanded duty, from prudence or difficulty, satisfies ourselves, which will not stand in the day of trial. What reason for the prophet's prayer in the sense just now assigned, " Remove far from me vanity and " lies."

4. In the next place, this request implies, a desire to be preserved from pride and self-conceit, upon any subject. There is not any thing that affords a stronger evidence of our being unacquainted with ourselves, and our own state, than that propensity to pride and vanity, which is so common to us all. It is thought by many, that pride was the sin of the angels, that cast them down to hell. It is plain, that pride was the main ingredient in the first sin of man. And perhaps it is a just, and proper description of all sin as such, that it is a dethroning of God, and setting up self to be loved, honored and served in his room. This sin is by no means confined to the worst of men, in whom it hath an absolute dominion; but retains and discovers an unhappy influence in the very best.—Every thing may be the fuel of pride: our persons our performances, our relations, our possessions; nay, so pliable, and at the same time so prepostcrous is this disposition, that men are found sometimes proud of their very vices and defects. But how ill do pride and vanity suit such poor mortals as we are, who seem born but to die?—Who as-

ter paſſing through a longer or ſhorter ſeries of weakneſſes, diſappointments and troubles, muſt, at laſt, be laid in the ſilent grave, to moulder in the duſt. We are dependant creatures, who have nothing, and can have nothing but what we receive from the unmerited favor of God. We are unwiſe and ignorant creatures, who know nothing to the bottom, and therefore, are liable to continual miſtakes in our conduct. Thoſe among us, who have the greateſt comprehenſion of mind, and know moſt; as it ſerves to ſhew the comparative ignorance of the bulk of mankind, ſo it ſerves to convince themſelves how little they do know, and how little they can know after all, compared with what is to them unſearchable.

But above all, we are ſinful creatures, who have rendered ourſelves, by our guilt, the juſt objects of divine diſpleaſure. Is there any who dares to plead exemption from this character? And do pride and vanity become thoſe, to whom they manifeſtly belong? Can any thing be more fooliſh, than indulging ſuch diſpoſitions? There is a very juſt expreſſion of one of the apocryphal writers: "Pride "was not made for man, nor a high look for him that is "born of a woman." Indeed they are ſo evidently unſuitable to our ſtate and circumſtances, that one would think, we ſhould need no higher principle than our own reaſon and obſervation to keep us free from them. We do, however, need the moſt earneſt and aſſiduous addreſſes to the throne of grace, to have all pride and vanity removed from us.—How hateful is pride to God! We are told, "he reſiſteth the proud." On the contrary, no diſpoſition is more amiable in his ſight, than humility. "He giveth grace to the humble." And again: "To "this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a "contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word. For thus "ſaith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, "whoſe name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, "with him alſo, that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit; "to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the "heart of the contrite ones.

It muſt, therefore, be the duty, and intereſt of every good man, not only to reſiſt pride and vanity, but to

make it a part of his daily ſupplication to God, that he may effectually be delivered from both.

5. In the laſt place: This requeſt implies a deſire to be delivered from fraud and diſſimulation of every kind. It is one of the glorious attributes of God, that he is a God of truth, who will not, and who cannot lie. He alſo requires of all his ſervants, and is delighted with truth in the inward parts. But there ſeems to be ſome difficulty in this part of the ſubject, more than in the others. Some will ſay, why pray to be delivered from fraud and diſſimulation? This might be an exhortation to the ſinner, but cannot be the prayer of the penitent. If they are ſincere in their prayer, it ſeems impoſſible there can be any danger of fraud. Fraud implies deliberation and deſign; and though it may be concealed from others upon whom it is exerciſed, it can never be concealed from the perſon in whom it dwells, and by whom it is contrived. This is the very language of ſome reaſoners, who infer from it, that though there are many other ſins to which a man may be liable without knowing it, yet this can never be the caſe with diſſimulation.

But, my brethren, if we conſider how apt men are, upon a ſudden temptation of fear or ſhame, or the proſpect of ſome advantage to themſelves, to depart from ſtrict veracity, and even to juſtify to their own minds, ſome kinds and degrees of deceptions, we ſhall ſee the abſolute neceſſity of making this a part of our prayer to God. Nay, perhaps I may go further and ſay, that we are as ready to deceive ourſelves in this point as in any other.

Upon this important ſubject, there is one conſideration to which I earneſtly intreat your attention. Thorough ſincerity, ſimplicity and truth, upon every ſubject, have, in the world, ſo much the appearance of weakneſs; and on the contrary, being able to manage and over-reach others, has ſo much the appearance of ſuperior wiſdom, that men are very liable to temptation from this quarter. It is to be lamented that our language itſelf, if I may ſo ſpeak, has received a criminal taint; for in common diſcourſe the expreſſion, *a plain well-meaning man* is always apprehended to imply, together with ſincerity, ſome degree

of weakneſs; although, indeed, it is a character of all others the moſt noble. In recommendation of this character let me obſerve, that in this, as in all the particulars mentioned above, "the wicked worketh a deceitful work; "but he that walketh uprightly walketh ſurely." Suppoſing a man to have the prudence and diſcretion not to ſpeak without neceſſity; I affirm there is no end which a good man ought to aim at, which may not be more certainly, ſafely, and ſpeedily obtained by the ſtricteſt and moſt inviolable ſincerity, than by any acts of diſſimulation whatever.

But after all, what ſignify any ends of preſent conveniency, which diſſimulation may pretend to anſwer, compared to the favor of God, which is forfeited by it? Hear what the Pſalmiſt ſays. "Who ſhall abide in thy taber-"nacle, who ſhall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walk-"eth uprightly and worketh righteouſneſs, and ſpeaketh "the truth in his heart."—Let us, therefore, add this to the other views of the prophet's comprehenſive prayer—"Remove far from me vanity and lies."

For the improvement of this part of the ſubject, obſerve,

1. You may learn from it how to attain, not only a juſtneſs and propriety, but a readineſs and fulneſs in the duty of prayer.

Nothing is a greater hinderance, either to the fervency of our affections, or the force of our expreſſions in prayer, than when the object of our deſires is confuſed and general. But when we perceive clearly what it is that is needful to us, and how much we do need it, this gives us, indeed, the ſpirit of ſupplication. Perhaps it is more neceſſary to attend to this circumſtance, in what we aſk for our ſouls than for our bodies. When we want any thing that relates to preſent conveniency, it is clearly underſtood, becauſe it is ſenſibly felt.—There is no difficulty in crying for deliverance from poverty, ſickneſs, reproach, or any other earthly ſuffering; nay, the difficulty here is not in exciting our deſires, but in moderating them: not in producing fervor, but in promoting ſubmiſſion: But in what relates to our ſouls, becauſe many or moſt temptations are agreeable to the fleſh, we foreſee danger leſs perfectly, and

even feel it leſs ſenſibly; therefore, a cloſe and deliberate attention to our ſituation and trials, as opened in the preceding diſcourſe, is of the utmoſt moment, "both to carry "us to the throne of grace, and to direct our ſpirit when "we are there."

2. What hath been ſaid will ſerve to excite us to habitual watchfulneſs, and to direct our daily converſation. The ſame things that are the ſubjects of prayer, are alſo the objects of diligence.—Prayer and diligence are joined by our Saviour, and ought never to be ſeparated by his people.—Prayer without watchfulneſs is not ſincere, and watchfulneſs without prayer will not be ſucceſsful. The ſame views of ſin and duty—of the ſtrength and frequency of temptation, and the weakneſs of the tempted lead equally to both. Let me beſeech you then, to walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe. Maintain an habitual diffidence of yourſelves—Attend to the various dangers to which you are expoſed. Watchfulneſs of itſelf will ſave you from many temptations, and will give you an inward warrant, and humble confidence, to aſk of God ſupport under, and deliverance from ſuch as it is impoſſible to avoid.

3. In the laſt place, ſince every thing comprehended in the petition in the text, is viewed in the light of falſehood and deceit, ſuffer me, in the moſt earneſt manner, to recommend to my hearers, and particularly to all the young perſons under my care, "an invariable adherence to truth, "and the moſt undiſguiſed ſimplicity and ſincerity in the "whole of their converſation and carriage." I do not know where to begin or end in ſpeaking of the excellency and beauty of ſincerity, or the baſeneſs of falſehood. Sincerity is amiable, honorable and profitable. It is the moſt ſhining part of a commendable character, and the moſt winning apology for any miſcarriage or unadviſed action. There is ſcarcely any action in itſelf ſo bad, as what is implied in the hardened front of him who covers the truth with a lie: Beſides, it is always a ſign of long practice in wickedneſs. Any man may be ſeduced or ſurprized into a fault, but none but the habitual villain can deny it with ſteady calmneſs and obſtinacy. In this reſpect, we unhappily find ſome who are young offenders, but old ſinners.

It is not in religion only, but even among worldly men, that lying is counted the utmoſt pitch of baſeneſs; and to be called a liar *the most insupportable reproach.* No wonder, indeed, for it is the very eſſence of cowardice to dare to do a thing which you have not courage to avow. The very worſt of ſinners are ſenſible of it themſelves, for they deeply reſent the imputation of it; and, if I do not miſtake, have never yet arrived at the abſurdity of defending it. There is ſcarcely any other crime, but ſome are profligate enough to boaſt of it; but I do not remember ever to have heard of any who made his boaſt, *that he was a liar.* To crown all, lying is the moſt wretched folly. Juſtly does Solomon ſay: "A lying tongue is but for a "moment." It is eaſily diſcovered. Truth is a firm conſiſtent thing, every part of which agrees with, and ſtrongly ſupports another. But lies are not only repugnant to truth, but repugnant to each other; and commonly the means, like a treacherous thief, of the detection of the whole. Let me, therefore, once more recommend to every one of you, the noble character of ſincerity.—Endeavor to eſtabliſh your credit in this reſpect ſo entirely, that every word you ſpeak may be beyond the imputation of deceit; ſo that enemies may, themſelves, be ſenſible, that though you ſhould abuſe them, you will never deceive them.

SEEKING A COMPETENCY IN THE WISDOM OF PROVIDENCE.

A

SERMON.

PROVERBS xxx. 8.

Give me neither poverty, nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me.

I PROCEED now to consider the second branch of the prophet's prayer, which regards his outward condition, or circumstances, in the present world. On this subject he expresses himself thus: "Give me neither poverty nor "riches."

Do not think, my brethren, that this is a subject of little importance; or that it is unconnected with the spiritual life. On the contrary, there are few things of more moment, than to have our desires of temporal blessings limited and directed in a proper manner. Not only is worldly mindedness the everlasting ruin of those who are entirely under its dominion; but even good men are liable to many temptations from the same quarter. They may hurt their own peace, give offence to others, or lessen their usefulness by a sinful excess in their attachment to the world, or by a criminal negligence in not giving a prudent and proper attention to it. Be not surprised that

I have mentioned the laſt of theſe as well as the firſt, for the prophet prays for deliverance from the temptation ariſing from both extremes. Idleneſs and ſloth are as contrary to true religion, as either avarice or ambition; and the habit when once taken, is perhaps more difficult to remove.

In order to treat this ſubject with the greater diſtinctneſs, I ſhall firſt ſhew you what we may learn in general from this prayer: ſecondly, explain the particular object of the prophet's deſire; and in the laſt place, make applications of what may be ſaid by recommending it to your choice.

I. In the firſt place then, we may learn in general from this requeſt, that it is lawful to pray for temporal bleſſings. It is not unworthy of a Chriſtian, whoſe converſation is in heaven, to aſk of God, what is neceſſary to his ſupport and preſervation in the preſent life. If I were to mention all the examples of this in ſcripture, I ſhould tranſcribe a great part of the Bible. Though inferior in their nature and value to ſpiritual bleſſings, they are neceſſary in their place; and it is upon this footing they are expreſſly put by our Saviour. "Your heavenly Father knoweth "that ye have need of all theſe things." They are needful to the prolonging of our natural life till we finiſh our work, and are fitted for our reward. Therefore, though miracles are a kind of ſuſpenſion of the laws of nature, and the ordinary courſe of providence; yet we find God ſometimes working a miracle to ſupply the wants of his ſervants. It had been no more difficult for God to have kept Elijah from hungering, than to have made the eagles fetch him proviſion; or to have made, as in another caſe, a barrel of meal, or a cruiſe of oil, the laſting and ſufficient ſupport of a whole family. But he chooſes rather to ſupply the wants of his people, than cauſe them to ceaſe, that he may keep their dependance conſtantly in their view, and that a ſenſe of their neceſſities may oblige them to have continual recourſe to him for relief.

Again, we may here learn, that God is the real and proper giver of every temporal, as well as of every ſpiri-

tual bleſſing. A ſentiment this, of the utmoſt conſequence, to be engraven upon the heart. We have here an inſtance out of many, in which truths known and confeſſed by all, have notwithſtanding little hold upon the mind. How few are truly ſenſible of their continual obligations to the God of life? Conſider, I beſeech you, that whatever you poſſeſs of any kind, it is the gift of God. He holdeth your ſoul in life, and guards you by his providence in your going out and in your coming in. He covereth your table and filleth your cup. Have you riches? It is by the bleſſing of the God of heaven——"The bleſſing of the Lord," ſaith the Pſalmiſt, "it maketh rich. But thou ſhalt re-"member the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee "power to get wealth." Have you credit and reputation? It is God that hideth you from the ſtripes of tongues. "Thou "ſhalt be hid from the ſcourge of the tongue, neither ſhalt "thou be afraid of deſtruction when it cometh." Have you friends? It is he that giveth you favor in their ſight. Have you talents and parts? It is the *inſpiration of the Almighty* that giveth thee underſtanding.

II. Let us now explain the particular tenor of this petition, and point out the object of the prophet's deſire; "Give me neither poverty nor riches." It is plain we are not to ſuppoſe the prophet, in any degree, refuſing ſubmiſſion to the will of God, by his thus making choice of a particular ſtate of life—Doubtleſs he reſolved to be at God's diſpoſal, and believed that he was able to ſanctify to him a ſtate of the higheſt proſperity, or of the deepeſt adverſity. It was no diſtruſt on God, but ſelf-denial and diffidence of his own ſtrength that ſuggeſted this prayer. Therefore, in adjuſting his deſires and expectations, he pitches upon that ſtate that appeared to him liable to the feweſt ſnares. Thus our bleſſed Saviour, though it is his will that we ſhould fear no enemy when going out in divine ſtrength, yet teaches us to pray—"Lead us not "into temptation."

Poverty and riches are here mentioned as the two extremes; in neither of which we ſhould wiſh to be placed, but in a ſafer middle between the two; ſo as, if it pleaſe

God, we may neither be urged by preſſing neceſſity nor over-loaded with ſuch abundance as we may be in danger of abuſing.

But perhaps ſome will ſay, where is the middle? How ſhall we be able to determine what we ought to deſire, ſince there is ſo immenſe a diſtance, and ſo many intermediate degrees between the extremity of want, and the countleſs treaſures of the wealthy?

But, my brethren, if we do not hearken to the illuſive calls of ambition, avarice and luſt, it is by no means difficult to apprehend the meaning of the prophet, and apply it to perſons of every rank. Regard, no doubt, is to be had to the various ſtations in which God hath thought fit to place us. This difference of ſtation requires ſupplies of the conveniencies of life, ſuited to the part we are bound to act. That manner of life which would be decent and liberal in one ſtation, would be reckoned mean and ſordid in another. Therefore, what would be plenty and fulneſs to perſons in inferior ſtations, would be extreme poverty to perſons placed, and called to act, in higher and more exalted ſpheres. But after we have taken in the conſideration of every difference that may happen on this ſcore, there is ſomething in the prayer that belongs in common to *persons of all stations*, namely, that we ſhould be modeſt in our deſires after temporal good things, and take care not to aſk only to gratify a ſenſual inclination, but for what is really neceſſary or uſeful to us. The laſt is reaſonable and allowable, the other is unreaſonable and juſtly condemned by the apoſtle James. "Ye aſk and "receive not, becauſe ye aſk amiſs, that ye may conſume "it upon your luſts."

But the firſt part of this requeſt is explained by the laſt, contained in the words, "feed me with food convenient "for me." That we may be able to enter into the true ſpirit of this petition, I ſhall juſt compare it with ſome other ſcriptural forms of prayer on the ſame ſubject, and then endeavor to point out what I take to be the chief inſtruction intended to be conveyed to us by it.

As to the ſcripture forms of prayer for temporal proviſion, the precedence is undoubtedly due to that excellent

form left us by our Saviour, in which we find this petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." You may next attend to the prayer put up by Jacob in ancient times. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with "me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will "give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that "I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall "the Lord be my God." It is more than probable that the apostle Paul alludes to Jacob's expression, in his excellent advice to all Christians. "But godliness with con-"tentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this "world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out; and "having food and raiment, let us be therewith content: "But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a "snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which "drown men in destruction and perdition—for the "love of money is the root of all evil, which while some "coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierc-"ed themselves through with many sorrows."

It is obvious to remark, that all these prayers and this apostolic counsel run in the same strain. They all begin and are founded upon a regard to God, and a mind rightly disposed towards him: "If the Lord," says Jacob, "will be with me"—"Remove," says Agur in my text, "far from me vanity and lies." Our Saviour begins his prayer with petitions for the glory of God, with which the happiness of our souls is inseparably connected; and the apostle maintains *godliness* as the great source of contentment with our portion in this life.

We may further observe, that there is the same method observed in all these prayers. The expressions vary a little, but the request is the same. Jacob wishes for the divine protection, with food to eat, and raiment to put on. Agur for food convenient for him; and in the Lord's prayer we ask for our daily bread. There is no specifying of any particulars—no mention made of this or the other quantity of provision. Their desires are summed up in this general request, and the quantity and quality wholly referred to the good pleasure of God. It is certain that God hath sometimes granted to his own people, riches

in great abundance; and, at the ſame time, has given his bleſſing to enjoy them, and honored the poſſeſſors, by enabling them to glorify him in the uſe and application of them. But the direct deſire of riches, I do not think, hath any warrant from precept or example in his word. And when they are beſtowed as a bleſſing, and not a curſe, it is commonly on thoſe who, by their ſuperior concern about the better part, ſhew that they will put them to their proper uſe, as in the caſe of Solomon, recorded in the firſt book of Kings. "In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solo-"mon in a dream by night; and God ſaid, aſk what I "ſhall give thee. And he ſaid, give thy ſervant an "underſtanding heart. And the ſpeech pleaſed the Lord, "that Solomon had aſked this thing. And God ſaid, be-"cauſe thou haſt aſked this thing, and haſt not aſked for "thyſelf long life, neither haſt aſked riches for thy-"ſelf, nor haſt aſked the life of thine enemies, but haſt aſk-"ed for thyſelf underſtanding, to diſcern judgment: Be-"hold I have done according to thy words; lo, I have "given thee a wiſe and an underſtanding heart, ſo that "there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee "ſhall any ariſe like unto thee. And I have alſo given "thee that which thou haſt not aſked, both riches and ho-"nor."

Now this I take to be the main inſtruction intended to be given us with reſpect to our prayers for temporal mercies; that we ſhould not pretend to ſet bounds to God, but leave the meaſure of them to his determination.

For further explaining this truth; and, at the ſame time recommending it to your regard, be pleaſed to attend to the following obſervations.

1. Conſider that God, infinitely wiſe, as well as gracious, is certainly the beſt judge of what is moſt fit and convenient for us. We know ſo little of ourſelves, that we really know not how we ſhould behave, if placed in particular circumſtances, until we are tried. The world has actually ſeen many examples of thoſe, who were loud in their accuſations of others, behaving worſe when placed in the ſame ſtations. And, indeed, I ſhould naturally expect, that an impatient, envious, diſobedient

ſubject would, if raiſed to power, be a cruel, inſolent, unjuſt oppreſſor; that a petulant, peeviſh obſtinate ſervant would make a capricious, ſevere, unreaſonable maſter.

If we were to carve out our own lot, and to have all our own deſires gratified, there is great reaſon to preſume, we would throw ourſelves into the moſt diſagreeable circumſtances with regard to our ſouls, and probably conſult but ill for our peace and comfort in this world.

Let me put a few queſtions to every one that ſecretly murmurs at his ſtate. Are you ſure, that if you were advanced to a place of power and truſt, you would be able to carry with prudence, reſolution and integrity? Are you ſure, that if you were ſupplied with riches in great abundance, you would not allow yourſelves to wander in pleaſure, or to ſwell in pride? Are you ſure, that if you were raiſed to high rank, ſurrounded by flatterers, and worſhipped by ſervants, you would, in that ſtanding, behave with humility and condeſcenſion; or that preſſed on all hands by buſineſs, company, or amuſements, you would ſtill religiouſly ſave your time for converſe with God?

A life of piety in an exalted ſtation is a continual conflict with the ſtrongeſt oppoſition. What ſays experience upon this ſubject? Solomon did not wholly, and to the end, reſiſt the temptation of riches and dominion. In the whole compaſs of hiſtory, ſacred and profane, I do not remember any example of a man's behaving better in point of morals, in a proſperous, than an afflicted ſtate, excepting one that hath this appearance, viz. Cicero, the Roman orator. His conduct in proſperity was full of dignity, and ſeemed wholly directed to the public good; whereas in adverſity, it was to the laſt degree mean and abject —But probably the reaſon of this was, that pride, or rather vanity, was his ruling paſſion, and the great motive to his illuſtrious actions; and when he fell into adverſity, this diſpoſition had no ſcope for its exerciſe.

Chriſtians, the Lord knoweth our frame, and is well acquainted with what we are able to bear, and conſequently what ſtate of life will be upon the whole moſt convenient for us. It is, therefore, our intereſt, as well as duty, to refer ourſelves entirely to him, and leave him to chooſe

for us. This is not only the doctrine of ſcripture, but ſo agreeable to reaſon and good ſenſe, that it has been acknowledged by ſeveral of the Heathen Philoſophers, who have expreſſed themſelves in terms perfectly ſimilar to thoſe of the inſpired writings. The prayer which Socrates taught his pupil Alcibiades, is very remarkable; that he ſhould beſeech the Supreme God to give him what was good for him, though he ſhould not aſk it; and to withhold from him whatever would be hurtful, though he ſhould be ſo fooliſh as to pray for it.

2. As God is certainly the beſt judge of what is good for us, ſo reſignation to him is a moſt acceptable expreſſion both of our worſhip and obedience. Single duties are particular acts; reſignation is the very *habit* of obedience. The wiſdom and goodneſs of God are acknowledged in the moſt authentic manner, when his holy and ſovereign Providence is humbly ſubmitted to, and cordially approved. Every impatient complaint is an impeachment of Providence; every irregular deſire is an act of rebellion againſt God. Therefore a ſubmiſſive temper muſt be highly pleaſing to God, and is the way to glorify him in the moſt unexceptionable manner. The rather indeed, as it is impoſſible to attain this temper, but by ſincerely laying hold of the covenant of peace, which is ordered in all things and ſure. This teaches us the grounds of ſubmiſſion. This procures for us the grace of ſubmiſſion. This ſtains the pride of all human glory. This changes the nature of our poſſeſſions to us, and us to them. This ſpiritualizes a worldly mind, and makes us know, in our own experience, that all the paths of the Lord to his own people, are mercy and peace.

3. Such a temper of mind will greatly contribute to our own inward peace. It will be an effectual preſervative from all unrighteous courſes, and unlawful, or even diſhonorable means of increaſing our worldly ſubſtance, and conſequently ſave us from the troubles or dangers to which men expoſe themſelves by ſuch practices. It will preſerve us from perplexing anxiety, and many uneaſy fears for futurity. It will bring us the near and ſure way to the greateſt of all earthly bleſſings—a contented mind.

Such will be the ſweet and delightful effects of depending upon God, and leaving it to him to furniſh our ſupplies as he ſees moſt convenient for us. Whoever can pray with the prophet— "give me neither poverty nor "riches, feed me with food convenient for me"— may be fully aſſured, that his deſire ſhall be gratified, as it is perfectly agreeable to the will of God.

I conclude with reading to you our Saviour's exhortation on this ſubject—"Therefore, I ſay unto you, take no "thought for your life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall "drink; nor yet for your body, what ye ſhall put on. Is "not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? "Behold the fowls of the air; for they ſow not, neither "do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly "Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than "they? But ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of God, and his "righteouſneſs; and all theſe things ſhall be added unto "you."

THE DANGER OF PROSPERITY.

A

SERMON.

PROVERBS xxx. 9.

Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? Or, lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

I PROCEED now to consider the arguments by which the prophet enforces his wise and well conceived prayer. These, in connexion with the two branches of the prayer, stand thus: "Give me not riches, lest I be full "and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? And give "me not poverty, lest I be poor, and steal, and take the "name of my God in vain." If Agur's prayer is conceived in the most modest and humble terms, the reasons, with which he supports it, are every way becoming a truly wise and good man. You see in them a prevailing concern for the honor and glory of God, and his own preservation in the paths of piety and virtue, You see in them a humble sense of his own weakness, and the danger of temptation; he, therefore, desires to be placed in such a state of life, as will expose him to the fewest trials. An excellent disposition this, and highly worthy of our imitation. How happy would it be for us all, if a desire to please God and preserve our integrity, lay always nearest

our hearts, and had a conſtant and commanding influence on every ſtep we took in our journey through life.

Neither riches nor poverty are bad in themſelves. Neither of them is any recommendation, or hinderance to the favor of God, who is no reſpecter of perſons—there are good and bad in all ranks. Men may be rich and yet pious, or poor, yet ſtrictly juſt and honeſt. It is, I confeſs, often done, yet it is highly criminal to look upon all that are rich in this world as profane; and it would be equally ſo to look upon all that are poor as deſtitute of integrity. Yet it is undeniable, that, from the corruption of the human heart, theſe two extremes do often become ſtrong temptations to the particular ſins mentioned in the text; which we ſhall now conſider ſeparately, in the order in which they lie in the paſſage before us.

"Give me not riches, leſt I be full and deny thee, and "ſay, who is the Lord?"

As to the fact, that riches do often lead to profanity and contempt of God, experience, and the ſtate of the world prove it in a manner too plain to be denied. We not only ſee that thoſe, who are born and educated from their infancy in the higher ranks of life, are moſt prone to neglect the duties of religion; but thoſe who, from a low or mean condition, are remarkably raiſed in the courſe of Providence, do often change their temper with their ſtate, and ſhow the unhappy influence of riches in leading them to a forgetfulneſs of God. Are there not ſome, who were regularly in God's houſe when they but barely ſubſiſted, who have not time for it now, when they are buſy and wealthy? Are there not ſome families, where the worſhip of God was conſtant and regular in early life, while they were undiſtinguiſhed, and now it is no more to be heard in their ſumptuous palaces and elegant apartments? Shall I ſay, that any worm of the earth is become too conſiderable to fall down before the omnipotent Jehovah?

I may add, as being of great importance in the preſent ſubject, that ſuch changes do often take place gradually and inſenſibly, very much contrary to men's own expectation; ſo that we really do not know ourſelves, nor can we determine before trial, how far we would reſiſt or

yield to the force of temptation. The prophet Elisha foretold to Hazael, the cruelties he would be guilty of when raised to an higher station; to which he replied with disdain and abhorrence; "What, is thy servant a dog, "that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, "the Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over "Syria." The conduct of the children of Israel in their prosperity, is but an emblem of the general conduct of the children of men. "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and "kicked. Thou art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, "thou art covered with fatness: Then he forsook God "which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his "salvation."

What hath been said might be sufficient to shew the propriety of the prophet's prayer; for if such hath been often, or generally, the influence of worldly greatness upon other men, why should any be so confident as to presume it would be otherwise with themselves? But perhaps it may afford matter of useful instruction, to inquire a little further into the subject—to trace the causes of this effect, and shew how, and why riches become an inducement to irreligion and profaneness, for this will best enable us to apply the remedy. When I speak of examining the causes of this effect, I confess that no reason can be given for it, but what reflects great dishonor upon human nature in its present state. Were we to judge of the matter by the dictates of sound reason, we should naturally expect to find it directly contrary. God is the author of every blessing which men possess, and his gifts should lead us to gratitude and acknowledgment. It seems natural then to suppose, that those who are most highly favored in the course of Providence, should discover the greatest sense of obligation, and be ready to make every dutiful return. One would think that though the poor should be impatient, surely the rich will be content and thankful. Is not this reasonable? Had any of you bestowed many favors upon others, would you not expect that their gratitude should bear some proportion to the number and value of benefits received? Had any of them been remarkably distinguished from the rest, would you not expect from

them the moſt inviolable fidelity and attachment? Strange, that our conduct ſhould be ſo directly oppoſite in the returns we make for the goodneſs of our Maker! That thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed from others by the largeſt poſſeſſions, and the greateſt fulneſs of all temporal mercies, ſhould be the moſt prone to wickedneſs of all ſorts; but eſpecially, that they ſhould be peculiarly inclined to forgetfulneſs and contempt of God. Yet ſo it is in truth. But however diſhonorable it is to human nature, let us ſearch into it a little, and perhaps we may diſcover the cauſe of impiety in perſons in affluent circumſtances, and the danger the prophet would avoid, by attending to the following obſervations:

1. An eaſy and affluent fortune affords the means, not only of pampering our bodies, but of gratifying all our luſts and appetites. They are as ſtrong probably in perſons of inferior ſtations, but Providence has rendered the gratification more difficult, and in ſome caſes impoſſible. Many work through neceſſity, who would be as idle and ſlothful as any, but for the fear of want. Theſe will be the firſt and readieſt to reproach the rich, and call them idle drones, who revel in that abundance for which they never toiled; and to put to their own credit that, which is wholly owing to the reſtraints under which they are laid. Many are generally ſober, becauſe they cannot afford the charges of intemperance, who want nothing but the means, to riot in the moſt brutal ſenſuality. But to perſons of great wealth, the objects of deſire are always placed in full view, and are evidently within their reach: ſo that the temptation has uncommon force, and few are able entirely to reſiſt it.

2. The indulgence of pleaſure inſenſibly induces a habit, and leads men to place their happineſs in ſuch enjoyments. Habit you know is very powerful, and while the habit acquires ſtrength, the power of reſiſtance is gradually weakened. Theſe gratifications conſume ſo much time, that there is little left to reflect upon God, and our relation to him. I reckon it none of the leaſt temptations to perſons of high rank, that not only their ſelf-indulgence, but the attendance and obſequiouſneſs of others, ſo en-

groſſes their attention, and waſtes their time, that they have few opportunities of calm and ſober reflection; or at leaſt, can eaſily eſcape from it, and take refuge in company and amuſement. Add to this, that a great variety of ſenſible objects and enjoyments render the mind, not only leſs attentive to things of a ſpiritual nature, but indeed, leſs able to underſtand them.

3. Obſerve further, that when the better part is thus neglected, and no care taken of the cultivation of the mind, every vice will ſpring and ſhoot up in the ſoul, as briars and thorns do upon uncultivated ground. Sin, my brethren, is natural to us; it is the produce of the ſoil; if it is not deſtroyed, it will not die; if it is but neglected, it will thrive. Now when ever perſons fall under the power of vice, they begin firſt to excuſe, and then to vindicate it. Thoſe who are under the government of luſt, ſoon find it would be their intereſt that there was no ſuch thing as religion and virtue. Whatever we wiſh, we are eaſily led to believe to be true. Looſe and atheiſtical principles then find a ready admittance, and are ſwallowed down greedily. This is a ſhort ſketch of the ſteps by which people in affluent and eaſy circumſtances, are often led to deny God, and to ſay: "What is the Almighty that we ſhould ſerve him, "and what profit ſhould we have if we pray unto him?"—Looſe principles are, at firſt, more frequently the effect, than the cauſe of looſe practices; but when once they have taken deep root, and obtained full dominion in the heart, they have a dreadful and fatal influence on the devoted victim.

But, my brethren, I find a ſtrong inclination to make another remark, though perhaps it may be thought of too refined and abſtract a nature. It is, that the danger of affluence in leading to contempt of God, ariſes from the nature of all ſin as ſuch. The original and firſt ſin of man, was plainly affecting independence. They deſired and expected to be as gods, knowing good and evil. And ſtill ſin properly conſiſts in withdrawing our allegiance from, and throwing off our dependance upon God, and giving, as it were, that eſteem, love and ſervice to ourſelves, in one ſhape or another, that is due only to him.

Now obſerve, that affluence nouriſhes this miſtake, and ſuffering kills it. The more every thing abounds with us, the more our will is ſubmitted to, and our inclinations gratified on every ſubject; the more we look upon ourſelves as independent, and forget our obligations to God. Whereas, on the other hand, diſappointments and calamities open our blind eyes, and make us remember what we are. Was not the proud monarch of Babylon inſpired with this deluſive ſenſe of independence, when he expreſſed himſelf thus: "At the end of twelve months "he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. "The king ſpake and ſaid, is not this great Babylon, that "I have built for the houſe of the kingdom, by the might "of my power, and for the honor of my majeſty?" But mark the more powerful word of the King of kings. "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a "voice from heaven, ſaying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to "thee it is ſpoken, the kingdom is departed from thee!" That this is the proper ſource of worldly greatneſs, may be ſeen in the temper, ſuch perſons uſually acquire and ſettle in, which is pride, inſolence and contempt of others. Nay, it appears ſtill more clearly in ſome few inſtances, in which the intoxication comes to its height, and the poor deluded mortal literally aſpired to be conſidered and treated as God. It may ſeem incredible, but we have the moſt authentic evidence that hiſtory can afford, that ſome men have demanded and received divine worſhip. This was the caſe, not only with Alexander the Great, who was really an illuſtrious prince, but with ſome of the later Roman emperors, who were the meaneſt and baſeſt of all men. No wonder then, that proſperity makes men neglect God, when it prompts them to ſit down upon his throne, and rob him of the ſervice of his other ſubjects.

Before I proceed to the other part of the prophet's argument, ſuffer me to make a few remarks, for the improvement of what has been already ſaid, And,

1. See hence the great malignity and deceitfulneſs o ſin. It hardly appears more ſtrongly from any circumſtance, than that which has been the ſubject of this diſcourſe, viz. that the gifts of God, in the courſe of his Pro-

vidence, are so far from exciting our gratitude, in proportion to their number and value, that on the contrary, those who *receive most* are usually *most profane*. They make his favors, instruments of rebellion against him, and return contempt for his indulgence, and hatred for his love.

Let us not take occasion from this to gratify our own envy, by particular or personal reproach against those who are great, or have become rich amongst themselves; but let us act a far wiser and juster part, and be humbled for the sinfulness of our nature, and warned of the deceitfulness of sin. We may feel the seeds of this disposition in us all. You find the wise man charging a similar ingratitude upon man in general. "Because sentence against "an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the "heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." And do you not observe every day, nay, has it not turned into a proverb, that we think light of our mercies, spiritual and temporal, when they are common and abundant? And what is the true and proper interpretation of this, but that the greater God's goodness is to us, commonly the less is our gratitude to him?

2. Let me beseech you to make a wise improvement of the advantages you enjoy over one another. Let them excite in you a holy emulation to testify your sense of superior blessings, by superior piety and usefulness. Do you excel others in any respect? Are you successful in trade? Have you risen to reputation? Are you exalted to offices of dignity? Are you endowed with capacity of mind? Can you remember the time when those were your equals who are now your inferiors? Do not look with insolence upon others, making odious, and perhaps unjust comparisons. Do not swell in pride and self-complacence, as if by your own power you had made yourselves to differ, but rather look the other way to God, who is the maker both of rich and poor, and pray that your thankfulness and duty to him may exceed that of the poor man, as much as his liberality to you exceeds what he has thought proper to bestow upon him. This affords me an opportunity of relating a little piece of private history, that happened in Great

Britain, and appears to me very worthy of remembrance, and very conducive to the ends of edification.

A gentleman of very conſiderable fortune, but a ſtranger to either perſonal or family religion, one evening took a ſolitary walk through a part of his own grounds. He happened to come near to a mean hut, where a poor man with a numerous family lived, who earned their bread by daily labor. He heard a voice pretty loud and continued. Not knowing what it was, curioſity prompted him to liſten. The man, who was piouſly diſpoſed, happened to be at prayer with his family. So ſoon as he could diſtinguiſh the words, he heard him giving thanks with great affection to God, for the goodneſs of his providence, in giving them food to eat, and raiment to put on, and in ſupplying them with what was neceſſary and comfortable in the preſent life. He was immediately, no doubt, by divine power, ſtruck with aſtoniſhment and confuſion, and ſaid to himſelf, does this poor man, who has nothing but the meaneſt fare, and that purchaſed by ſevere labor, give thanks to God for his goodneſs to himſelf and family, and I, who enjoy eaſe and honor, and every thing that is grateful and deſirable, have hardly ever bent my knee, or made any acknowledgment to my Maker and preſerver. It pleaſed God that this providential occurrence proved the mean of bringing him to a real and laſting ſenſe of God and religion.

Let all perſons in health, quiet and plentiful circumſtances, learn from the preceding diſcourſe, what it is they ought clearly to guard againſt.—Pride, ſecurity, forgetfulneſs of God, are peculiarly incident to that ſtate. "Lo "this," ſaith the Lord to Jeruſalem, "was the iniquity of "thy ſiſter Sodom, pride, fulneſs of bread, and abundance "of idleneſs was in her, and in her daughters, neither "did ſhe ſtrengthen the hand of the poor and needy." A ſerious reflection on the obligation ſuch lie under to God for what they have received in their continued dependance upon him, and the inſtability of all earthly things, would ſave them from the hurtful influence of worldly proſperity. To enforce this, I ſhall only read the apoſtolic charge to Timothy. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that

" they be not high minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches,
" but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly
" to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good
" works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate;
" laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation
" againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eter-
" nal life."

THE DANGER OF ADVERSITY.

A

SERMON.

PROVERBS xxx. 9.

Lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

I PROCEED now to consider the argument by which the prophet urges the second branch of his request, which, in connexion, runs thus—"Give me not poverty, "lest I be poor and steal." Having not only explained the general principle that runs through the whole of this subject, but also very particularly pointed out the dangers attending an opulent and wealthy state; I shall endeavor to do the same thing with respect to a state of poverty and straitness. While I attempt this, I am sincerely sorry that there is so much propriety in the subject; and that it is so well suited to the circumstances of the inhabitants of this place. You see the prophet considers the great and general temptation to which the poor are exposed, to be dishonest, by using fraudulent means of relieving their wants, or bettering their condition. You see also, he considers this temptation in its progress, not only inclining them to act unjustly, but sometimes proceeding to the terrible degree of concealing or supporting the fraud by false-

hood, and perhaps at last by perjury or false swearing; "lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God "in vain."

Let us first consider a little the matter of fact, as it appears in experience, and then a few of its principal causes.

As to the first of these, shall I be afraid to affirm, that extreme poverty often inclines persons to dishonesty and fraud? Will it be thought harsh and severe to those already sufficiently depressed? As I would not seem to stand in this place, and flatter the pride of the greatest and most eminent of my fellow-sinners, so neither will I dissemble the truth from a false compassion for the poor. This would indeed be doing them the greatest possible injury; it would be treating them, from mistaken tenderness, as the rich are often treated from the fear or partiality of those who are about them; fostering their self-deceit, and not suffering them to hear the most salutary truths, because they are not pleasing to the flesh.

It is undoubtedly matter of experience, that great poverty makes many take unjust and unwarrantable methods of procuring relief. Not only so, but they seem often disposed to justify and defend them, as if they had a title to rectify the mistakes of Providence, in the distribution of worldly possessions. This, in the event, receives great encouragement from some who seem to have imbibed a general false principle, and act upon it, both in their own conduct, and in their judgment of others. In the division of controversy, or dividing disputed property, when one party is, or is supposed to be rich, and in easy circumstances, and the other poor, and in a mean condition, they think that instead of acting according to strict justice, the advantage should always be made to fall to the poorer side. This conduct is considered by some, not only as lawful, but as laudable. It is however a false principle, and is condemned in scripture, which says, "Neither "shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause." It may be thought, perhaps, that the other is the more common and dangerous partiality, and probably it is so; yet this also is blame-worthy, and when followed out, as I am

afraid it too often is, muſt involve numbers unawares in the guilt of ſtealing; for when they have once laid down this rule, that the poor have ſome claim upon the rich, they are ready to apply it to their own caſe, and extend it very far. But in all matters of property, or right and wrong, whether a perſon is rich or poor, ought to be utterly out of the queſtion; the only thing to be conſidered is, what is juſt and lawful. The rich are indeed, in point of conſcience, bound to aſſiſt the poor; but this muſt be their own act; no perſon can take the ſmalleſt part of their property, without their conſent, but he is guilty of an act of injuſtice, and violation of the law of God. No perſon has a right to make them generous and charitable againſt their wills, or to exerciſe their own generoſity and charity at their expence. This muſt be left to the Supreme Judge at the laſt day, who will ſay to them, "I was a ſtranger "and ye took me not in, naked and ye clothed me not, "ſick and in priſon and ye viſited me not." But what will give us the moſt diſtinct view of the influence of poverty, as a temptation, is the too frequent conduct of thoſe who are reduced from what was once their ſtate, to poverty or debt, by misfortunes or extravagance, or miſmanagement of their affairs. The temptation of poverty is not by far ſo great to thoſe in the meaneſt ranks of life, whoſe income, though ſmall, is not very diſproportionate to what hath always been their condition; as to thoſe who are reduced from a higher to a lower ſtate—The few, who in ſuch a ſituation preſerve their integrity inviolated, and their ſincerity of ſpeech unſuſpected, deſerve the higheſt honor. Nay, I am perſuaded that, bad as the world is, every perſon in reduced circumſtances, would meet with compaſſion and aſſiſtance, if all about him were ſenſible that he had neither loſt his ſubſtance by neglect, nor waſted it by riot, nor concealed it by fraud. But though we cannot help aſcribing ſome meaſure of what is laid to the charge of perſons in this unhappy ſtate, to the rage and reſentment of thoſe who have ſuffered by them; yet alas, there is too great reaſon to affirm, that they are too often guilty of prevarication and fraud the ſins mentioned in the text.

I will dwell no longer upon the fact, but will consider a little the reasons of it, which will directly serve to promote the design of this discourse, by exciting men to concern and solicitude, as well as pointing out the proper means of avoiding the temptation. The general reason of this, to be sure, is obvious to every body, that persons in poverty, being strongly solicited by the appetites common to all men, and not having their own wherewith to gratify their desires, are tempted to lay hold of the property of others. They grudge to see that others have the enjoyments from which they are debarred; and since they cannot have them in a lawful, make bold to seize them in an unlawful way. But this I do not insist on, that I may mention one or two particular reasons, which will suggest suitable exhortations to duty.

1. The first I shall mention, is ignorance. This is peculiarly applicable to those in the lowest ranks of life. Through poverty they are not so well instructed as they ought to be, in the principles of religion, and the great rules of duty. An ignorant state is almost always a state of security.—Their consciences are less tender, and they are less sensible of the great evil of prevarication and fraud. I am obliged, in fidelity, to say, that in the private inspection of my charge, though I have found some instances both of poverty and sickness borne with the most pious resignation, there are also some whose condition might move the hardest heart, living in the most sordid poverty, grossly ignorant, and, at the same time, so dispirited, so slothful, or so proud, that they will do little to obtain knowledge for themselves, or communicate it to their children. Many will not attend upon the public means of instruction, because they cannot appear in such a decent garb as they could wish; and for the same reason they keep their children from them, till they contract such habits of idleness and vice, that they come out into the world without principle, obstinate and intractable. Is not the duty here very plain? All such should exert themselves to obtain the knowledge of the things which belong to their peace. They should neither be unwilling nor ashamed to make application for supply; and even the coarsest raiment should not hinder them from

appearing in the houſe of God. Thus they will find acceptance with him, if they worſhip him in the beauty of holineſs, preferable to thoſe who are clothed in purple and fine linen, and their hearts are after their covetouſneſs.

2. Another great reaſon why poverty becomes a temptation to fraud is, that they are introduced to it inſenſibly, and led on by degrees. The ſin ſteals upon them by little and little. People involved in their circumſtances, to get rid of importunity and ſolicitation, make promiſes, more of what they hope or wiſh, than of what they are able to do. Neceſſity ſerves as an excuſe for their failing to their own minds, and thus they are gradually brought into a breach of ſincerity, and proceed from lower to higher degrees of falſhood. Little arts of evaſion are firſt made uſe of, and doubtful practices are entered upon. One ſin ſeems neceſſary to ſtrengthen or conceal another, till at laſt the groſſeſt fraud, and ſometimes perjury itſelf, cloſes the unhappy ſcene. I have read an excellent obſervation, that there is hardly ſuch a thing as a ſingle ſin; they are always to be found in cluſters. I am ſure, this holds in a particular manner as to ſins of injuſtice. They are ſo interwoven and connected together, that you cannot receive any one without being obliged to admit the reſt. This is one great branch of the deceitfulneſs of ſin in general; with a view to which the apoſtle ſays; "But exhort one another daily while it is called to-"day, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitful-"neſs of ſin."

3. I only mention one other reaſon of poverty being a temptation to fraud, viz. that in time it deſtroys the ſenſe of ſhame. I am not ignorant, that a ſenſe of ſhame, which is nothing elſe but a fear of the cenſure of others, neither is, nor ought to be the main principle of a good man's actions. But as there is no other principle at all in many, ſo it is a good aſſiſtant, and corroborative when juſtly directed; But now, through the corrupt maxims of the world, poverty is ſo much the object of contempt, and thoſe who are in this ſtate, meet every day with ſo many marks of neglect from all, that before their condition is known, they will do almoſt any thing to conceal it, and

after it is known, they become in time so destitute of shame, that they are under no further restraint.

From this particular branch of the subject, let me put you in mind,

1. What reason many have to be thankful to the God of life, who hath given them their daily provision, if not in all the abundance of immense riches, yet in fulness and sufficiency. An humble, thankful disposition is not only your duty, in return for the divine bounty, but is itself the richest and sweetest ingredient in all temporal mercies. —It is that, indeed, which makes them mercies.—Envious persons do not taste what they have, their evil eye being fixed on what they cannot obtain. Things in this respect are just what they seem to be. Our comforts are as we are enabled to relish them. The same possessions which are despised by the impatient or ambitious, are a treasure and abundance to the humble and grateful.

2. If poverty is a temptation, it ought to be an argument to all to avoid it, or seek deliverance from it by lawful means. Apply yourselves with steadiness and perseverance to the duties of your calling, that you may provide things honest in the sight of all men. It is a duty of the land, and of the gospel; and it hath this promise, in general, annexed to it, that "the hand of the diligent "maketh rich." Read, I beseech you, that vast treasure of useful instruction, the book of Proverbs; where you will meet with many excellent counsels and wise observations upon this subject. Of these I shall mention at present, but two passages, selected both for the soundness of the instruction, and the beauty of the illustration. "Go "to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise; "which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth "her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the "harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When "wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? So shall thy poverty "come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed "man." And again; "I went by the field of the sloth-"ful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understand-"ing; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles

" had covered the face thereof, and the ſtone-wall thereof " was broken down."

3. Are any of you poor and reduced in your circumſtances, ſet a double watch upon your conduct, and earneſtly pray that God may preſerve you from fraud and diſingenuity of every kind. Rather ſuffer yourſelves to be ſtripped of every thing, and apply to the charity of others, which is not ſinful, and ought not to be ſhameful, than take any diſhoneſt methods of bettering your ſtate. O melancholy thought, that many, when they become deſperate in their circumſtances, become alſo deſperate in their courſes, and drown the reflection of their conſciences in ſlothfulneſs and ſenſuality! Sincerity, integrity, patience and ſobriety in a ruined fortune are doubly eminent, at leaſt, whatever they may be in the ſight of the world, they are honorable and precious in the ſight of God, and of all good men.

Before concluding, ſuffer me to make one or two reflections on the ſubject in general; the ſeveral parts of which I have now explained. And,

1. On what hath been ſaid on this ſubject, I would graft this important leſſon; that you ſhould not only ſtudy to preſerve yourſelves from ſin, but from all ſuch circumſtances of temptation as are dangerous to human conſtancy. This was the very ground of the prayer of the prophet in my text, and is the ſubſtance of the reaſons he aſſigns for his requeſt. We are taught the ſame thing in the ſtrongeſt manner, by the ſeveral inſtances of human frailty, and the folly of preſumptuous confidence, recorded in ſcripture. " Now all theſe things happened unto " them for enſamples, and they are written for our admo- " nition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. " Wherefore, let him that thinketh he ſtandeth take heed " leſt he fall." We are alſo taught the ſame thing by him who knew what was in man, as he has given us directions in the form of prayer which he taught his diſciples, to ſay, Lord, " lead us not into temptation."

Are you really unwilling to do evil, you will be concerned to keep yourſelves out of the way of every ſolicitation to it. This is conſtantly the effect of a judicious

and ſolid piety, and thoſe who act otherwiſe ſhew, that they either have no real goodneſs, or that they are very weak Chriſtians, and little acquainted either with themſelves, or this preſent evil world.

2. You may learn how neceſſary it is, that you ſhould look for the divine aſſiſtance and direction, to avoid the temptation of every ſtate of life. We are truly of ourſelves unequal to the trials with which we are ſurrounded. Not that there is any thing unjuſt or oppreſſive in the meaſures of Providence; but becauſe it ſeems good to our Maker, to oblige us to a conſtant dependance upon himſelf and his promiſed help. "But God is faithful, who will not ſuffer "you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with "the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may "be able to bear it."

The leaſt temptation may prove too hard for us, if we neglect to apply for ſupreme aid; but in divine ſtrength, we may bid defiance to the moſt formidable oppoſition. This temper is well exemplified and deſcribed by the apoſtle Paul to the Corinthians. "And he ſaid unto me, "my grace is ſufficient for thee, for my ſtrength is made "perfect in weakneſs. Moſt gladly, therefore, will I ra-"ther glory in my infirmities, that the power of Chriſt "may reſt upon me. Therefore, I take pleaſure in in-"firmities, in reproaches, in neceſſities, in perſecution, "in diſtreſſes for Chriſt's ſake; for when I am weak then "am I ſtrong."

3. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee what an inſeparable connexion there is between true religion, and your employments, and ſtate in this preſent world. They have a mutual, ſtrong, and conſtant influence upon one another. It is a fatal, though a common error to ſeparate them; entirely to confine religion to the times and places of immediate worſhip, and ſuppoſe that it hath nothing to do with the maxims of trade and commerce, or other worldly callings. On the contrary, your impreſſions of things ſpiritual and eternal, will direct and regulate your views as to the preſent life; and your ſucceſs or misfortunes in worldly ſchemes, will have a certain and viſible effect upon your Chriſtian converſation, and the ſtate of

your ſouls. Therefore, let them never be ſeparated in your own views, and let them ſtill be kept in their proper order and ſubordination. Though the light and trivial uſe, not only of the name of God, but of ſcripture-language, is both ſinful and dangerous; and though a forward oſtentatious piety may ſometimes look ſuſpicious, yet it were to be wiſhed we had more of a grave and habitual acknowledgment of God in all our ways. This was the language of the Patriarchs of old. In one of the former diſcourſes upon this ſubject, I took notice of Jacob's prayer, when he ſet out for Padan-aram. See after the increaſe of his family, how he expreſſes himſelf in anſwer to his brother Iſaac. "And he lift up his eyes and ſaw "the women and children, and ſaid, who are thoſe with "thee? And he ſaid the children which God hath graci- "ouſly given thy ſervant." See alſo the apoſtolical direction for the manner of projecting our future purpoſes.— "Go to now, ye that ſay to-day, or to-morrow, we will "go into ſuch a city, and continue there a year, and buy "and ſell, and get gain."

4. In the laſt place, let me beſeech, in the tendereſt manner, every one of you, rich and poor, to remember an approaching eternity. It will not be long till the honorable, and deſpiſed, the wealthy and the needy, the maſter and the ſervant, ſhall lie down in the duſt. Lay hold of that covenant of peace which is ordered in all things and ſure. Hear a great and conſtant truth. "What is a "man profited, though he ſhould gain the whole world "and loſe his own ſoul, or what ſhall a man give in ex- "change for his ſoul?" How many a Lazarus is now in Abraham's boſom; and how many a rich man, that once lived delicately on earth, is at this moment tormented in hell-fire! The goſpel of peace is now preached in your ears. Believe in the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and ye ſhall be ſaved. I cannot promiſe that you ſhall be rich; but all things neceſſary are aſſured to you by the divine promiſe; food and raiment, ſupport under trials, ſtrength for duty, and in the world to come, everlaſting reſt.

ON THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

A

SERMON,

Preached in the Old Presbyterian Church in New-York, to a very numerous audience, on the evening of the second Sabbath in May, 1789.

MARK X. 13, 14, 15, 16.

And they brought young children unto him, that he should touch them, and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

THERE are few things in which persons of reflection, in general, and especially those who fear God, are more agreed, than the importance of the rising generation; or, which is the true meaning of that expression, the importance of the instruction and government of youth.

This is a subject of great extent, and may also be taken up in a great variety of lights. I am one of those who think

that it may, as well as many others, be, with much advantage, conſidered doctrinally; and that a clear view of divine truth upon every ſubject, will have the moſt powerful and happy influence, not only in directing our ſentiments, but in governing our practice.

There is much to be ſeen of the proper glory of the Redeemer in this paſſage of ſcripture. His uſefulneſs—his attention to improve every ſeemingly accidental occurrence for the purpoſe of inſtruction, and his amiable condeſcenſion to all who humbly applied to Him, and tender feeling for their wants and weakneſſes. It appears from this paſſage, that the inhabitants about Jordan, where he then was, not only brought their ſick to be healed, as they did in moſt other places, but brought young children "that he ſhould touch them." In Luke they are called infants; and in the latter end of the paſſage now read, it is ſaid, he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and bleſſed them; ſo that it is probable they were all of them of very early age, and ſome of them, perhaps literally what we call infants, who could not yet ſpeak or walk. I ſee not the leaſt foundation for what ſome commentators ſuppoſe, that they might labor under ſome diſorder, from which the parents ſuppoſed he would cure them: If this had been the intention, the diſciples would not, probably, have found any fault with it. The probability is, that the parents or relations of the children brought them, expecting that he would lay his hands on them—authoritatively bleſs them, and pray for them; from which they believed important benefits might be derived to them. The diſciples, we are told, "rebuked thoſe that brought "them," ſuppoſing, doubtleſs, that it was an impertinent and unneceſſary interruption of their maſter, and that the children could receive no benefit at that early time of life; and who knows but, like the human wiſdom of later times, they might think the attempt ſuperſtitious as well as unneceſſary; however, our Lord was of a different opinion, and ſaid—"Suffer the little children to come unto me, "and forbid them not; for of ſuch is the kingdom of "God."

Now the ſingle ſubject of this diſcourſe ſhall be to inquire, What is the import of this declaration? and, What we may underſtand our Saviour as affirming, when he ſays, of young children or infants, "of ſuch is the kingdom of God?" After this, I will give ſuch advices as the truths that may be eſtabliſhed ſhall ſuggeſt, and as they ſeem to me moſt proper to enforce.

Let us then conſider what we may underſtand our Saviour as affirming, when he ſays, of young children or infants, "of ſuch is the kingdom of God."

And, in the firſt place, we may underſtand by it, that children may be taken within the bond of God's covenant; become members of the viſible church, and, in conſequence, be *relatively* holy. I do not found the lawfulneſs of infant baptiſm on this paſſage alone, and mean to enter into no controverſy on the ſubject at this time; but, as it is clearly eſtabliſhed in other paſſages, it may well be underſtood here. At any rate ſo far as I have affirmed is undoubtedly certain, that they *may be* admitted within the bond of God's covenant. We know, that under the Old Teſtament, they received the ſign of circumciſion, which in the New Teſtament, is ſaid to be "a ſeal of the "righteouſneſs that is of faith." (Rom. iv. 11.) Many benefits may ariſe from this. As in the natural conſtitution of man many advantages and diſadvantages are derived from parents upon the offspring, ſo in the moral conſtitution of divine grace many bleſſings, ſpiritual and temporal, may be inherited from pious parents. Children are the ſubjects of prayer; and, of conſequence, within reach of the promiſe. The believer may juſtly hope for his ſeed dying in infancy, and in after life, many eventual providential mercies may be expected from that God who "ſheweth mercy to thouſands of generations of them that "love him."

It was uſual in the moſt ancient times, for aged or holy perſons to bleſs children formally. I do not recollect in ancient hiſtory, a more beautiful, or more tender ſcene, than that we have recorded, Gen. xlviii. 15. of the patriarch Jacob's bleſſing his grand-children, the ſons of Joſeph, when he was about to die—"And he bleſſed Joſeph and

" ſaid, God before whom my fathers, Abraham and Iſaac, " did walk, the God which fed me all my life long to this " day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bleſs " the lads; and let my name be named upon them, " and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Iſaac: " And let them grow into a multitude in the midſt of the " earth." We are told by an ancient writer of the Chriſtian church, that Ignatius, afterwards biſhop of Antioch, was one of thoſe children thus brought to Chriſt for his bleſſing; and there is no reaſon, that I know of, to oppoſe the tradition: For ſuppoſing him to have been an infant, or even from 2 to 5 years of age, it would make him only between 70 and 80 at the time of his martyrdom, in the year 108 from the birth of Chriſt.

2. The declaration " of ſuch is the kingdom of God," may be underſtood to imply, that children may, even in infancy, be the ſubjects of regenerating grace, and thereby become *really* holy. This is plain from the nature of the thing; for if they can carry the corrupt impreſſion of Adam's nature in their infant ſtate, there can be no doubt but they may be renewed after the image of him that created them. Almighty power can eaſily have acceſs to them, and can, in anſwer to prayers, as well as endeavors, form them for their Maker's ſervice. See what the prophet Iſaiah ſays, xxviii. 9. " Whom ſhall he teach know- " ledge? and whom ſhall he make to underſtand doctrine? " Thoſe that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the " breaſts." Samuel was a child of prayer, and dedicated to God from his infant years, and it is ſaid of him, 1 Sam. ii. 26. " And the child Samuel grew, and was in favor " both with the Lord, and alſo with men." It is an expreſſion frequently to be found in pious writers, and among them that are far from denying the univerſal corruption of human nature, that ſome may be ſaid to be ſanctified from the womb—that is, that the time of their renovation may be beyond the reach both of underſtanding and memory; and this being certainly poſſible, may juſtly be conſidered as the object of deſire and the ſubject of prayer. Few, perhaps, have failed to obſerve, that ſome children diſcover upon the firſt dawn of reaſon, an amiable and

tractable diſpoſition, and drink in ſpiritual inſtruction, with deſire and delight; while others diſcover a frowardneſs and repugnance that is with much difficulty, if at all, and ſometimes never overcome.

3. I think this declaration implies, that children are much more early capable of receiving benefit, even by outward means, than is generally ſuppoſed. No doubt the reaſon of the conduct of the diſciples was, that they ſuppoſed the children could receive no benefit. In this, from our Lord's anſwer, it is probable he thought them miſtaken. I will not enlarge on ſome refined remarks of perſons as diſtinguiſhed for learning as piety; ſome of whom have ſuppoſed, that they are capable of receiving impreſſions of deſire and averſion, and even of moral temper, particularly, of love or hatred, in the firſt year of their lives. I muſt, however, mention a remark of the juſtly celebrated M. Fenelon, archbiſhop of Cambray, becauſe the fact on which it is founded is undeniable, and the deduction from it important. He ſays, that 'before 'they are thought capable of receiving any inſtruction, or 'the leaſt pains are taken with them, they learn a lan-'guage.—Many children at four years of age can ſpeak 'their mother tongue, though not with the ſame accura-'cy or grammatical preciſion, yet with greater readineſs 'and fulneſs than moſt ſcholars do a foreign language 'after the ſtudy of a whole life.' If I were to enlarge upon this I might ſay, they not only diſcover their intellectual powers by connecting the idea with the ſign, but acquire many ſentiments of good and evil, right and wrong, in that early period of their life. Such is the attention of children, that they often ſeem to know their parents tempers ſooner and better than they know their's, and to avail themſelves of that knowledge to obtain their deſires.

To apply this to our preſent ſubject, or rather the occaſion of it, allow me to obſerve, that the circumſtances of ſolemn tranſactions are often deeply engraven upon very young minds. It is not impoſſible that ſome of thoſe young children might recollect and be affected with the majeſty and condeſcenſion of Jeſus of Nazareth, and

the impreſſion be attended with happy fruits. At any rate, as no doubt the parents would often relate the tranſaction to their children, this would be a kind of ſecondary memory, and have the ſame effect upon their ſentiments and conduct.

4. This declaration implies, that the earlieſt, in general, is the fitteſt and beſt time for inſtruction. This part of the ſubject has been treated at full length by many writers in every age, I therefore ſhall ſay the leſs upon it—Only obſerve, That the importance of early inſtruction is written upon the whole ſyſtem of nature, and repeated in every page of the hiſtory of Providence. You may bend a young twig and make it receive almoſt any form; but that which has attained to maturity, and taken its ply, you will never bring into another ſhape than that which it naturally bears. In the ſame manner thoſe habits which men contract in early life, and are ſtrengthened by time, it is next to impoſſible to change. Far be it from me to lay any thing in oppoſition to the infinite power and abſolute ſovereignty of God; but let us alſo beware of conſidering theſe as oppoſed to the natural courſe of things, or the uſe and efficacy of means. We have many warnings upon this ſubject in ſcripture, where the recovery of an habitual and hardened ſinner, is likened to a natural impoſſibility, Jer. xiii. 23.—"Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the "leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good that are ac- "cuſtomed to do evil." God will reſerve to himſelf his own abſolute ſovereignty, but it is at every ſinners own peril if he preſume upon it and abuſe it.

5. This declaration of our Saviour—"Of ſuch is the "kingdom of God"—may imply, that, in fact, the real diſciples of Chriſt chefly conſiſt of thoſe who are called in their earlier years. The viſible church of Chriſt is a numerous and mixed ſociety; but his myſtical body, conſiſting of real believers, I think we are warranted from this paſſage of ſcripture and others, as well as the analogy of faith, and the reaſon and nature of things, to ſuppoſe, conſiſts for the moſt part of thoſe who are called in infancy and youth. This is an important truth, and deeply fraught with inſtruction to all, of every rank. There are

ſome called after a courſe of oppoſition to God, but there are few in compariſon; therefore the apoſtle Paul ſtyles himſelf—"One born out of due time." Perhaps experience and a deliberate view of the ſtate of the world, is ſufficient to prove this aſſertion. The inſtances of converſion in advanced life, are very rare: and when it ſeems to happen, it is perhaps moſt commonly the reſurrection of thoſe ſeeds which were ſown in infancy, but had been long ſtifled by the violence of youthful paſſions, or the purſuits of ambition and the hurry of an active life. I have known ſeveral inſtances of the inſtructions long neglected of deceaſed parents, at laſt riſing up, aſſerting their authority, and producing the deepeſt penitence and real reformation. But my experience furniſhes me with no example of one brought up in ignorance and ſecurity, after a long courſe of profaneneſs turning, at the cloſe of life, to the ſervice of the living God. The moſt common caſe is, that the deep ſleep continues to the laſt, and, as the ſaying is, they die as they live; though in ſome inſtances, when the ſins have been of the groſſeſt kind, conſcience awakens at their going off the ſtage, and they ſeem, as it were, to begin the torments of hell with the terror of deſpair.

You will find in ſome practical writers an opinion, or ſentiment, that ſeems not ill founded to the following purpoſe, 'Some are called at the eleventh hour that none 'may deſpair,' and there are few that now may preſume. Others make a diſtinction, not without ground, as it ſeems founded upon the wiſdom and equity of the divine government; That when the goſpel comes to a people that had long ſitten in darkneſs, there may be numerous converts of all ages; but when the goſpel has been long preached in plenty and purity, and ordinances regularly adminiſtered, few but thoſe who are called in early life are ever called at all. A very judicious and pious writer, Mr. Richard Baxter, is of opinion, that in a regular ſtate of the church, and a tolerable meaſure of faithfulneſs and purity in its officers; family inſtruction and government are the uſual means of converſion, public ordinances of edification. This ſeems agreeable to the language of

ſcripture; for we are told God hath ſet in the church "apoſtles, prophets, evangeliſts, paſtors and teachers," (not for converting ſinners, but) "for perfecting of the "ſaints for the work of the miniſtry, and the edifying of "the body of Chriſt." It ſeems to add further weight to this, that moſt of thoſe who are recorded in ſcripture as eminent for piety, were called in early life; and we know not but it may have been the caſe with others, though not particularly mentioned: Thoſe I have in view, are Abraham, Moſes, Samuel, David, Solomon, Joſiah, Daniel and the three Children, in the Old Teſtament, and in the New, John Baptiſt and John the beloved diſciple; of whom I may juſt obſerve, that no other reaſon has ever been given for the Saviour's diſtinguiſhing him by particular affection, but that he was the youngeſt of the twelve.

6. In the laſt place, this declaration implies that the comparative innocence of children is a leſſon to us, and an emblem of the temper and carriage of Chriſt's real diſciples. This inſtruction we are not left to infer for ourſelves. Our Lord has made the remark in the paſſage where the text lies, "Whoſoever ſhall not receive the "kingdom of God as a little child ſhall not enter therein." This is directly levelled againſt the pride of ſelf-ſufficiency, and every rough and boiſterous paſſion. It is remarkable that the very ſame image is made uſe of in ſeveral paſſages of ſcripture. Thus, Mat. xviii. 1, 2, 3, 4. "At "the ſame time came the diſciples unto Jeſus, ſaying, "Who is the greateſt in the kingdom of heaven? And "Jeſus called a little child unto him, and ſet him in the "midſt of them, and ſaid, verily I ſay unto you, except "ye be converted, and become as little children, ye ſhall "not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoſoever, "therefore ſhall humble himſelf as this little child, the "ſame is greateſt in the kingdom of heaven." So alſo the apoſtle Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 20. "Brethren, be not chil- "dren in underſtanding: howbeit, in malice be ye chil- "dren, but in underſtanding be men:"—And further, 1 Peter ii. 1, 2. "Wherefore laying aſide all malice, and "all guile, and hypocriſies, and envies, and all evil ſpeak-

" ings,—as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the " word, that ye may grow thereby." The graces of the spiritual life recommended to us by this beautiful image, are humility, gentleness, teachableness, sincerity, and easiness to be reconciled: all which are remarkable in young persons, and are frequently lost or vitiated by growing years.

I come now to make a practical improvement of the subject, which shall be confined to pointing out the duties suggested by the foregoing truths, as they are severally incumbent on, 1. parents; 2. children; 3. every hearer of the gospel.

1. Let us consider the duties incumbent on parents. Is it so, that of children or infants the Redeemer said, of such is the kingdom of God? Then parents should be (1) thankful. Thankfulness is a happy frame of spirit in itself, and powerfully reconciles the mind to difficult, and animates it to important duties. Be thankful then for the honor that is done you, for the trust that is reposed in you, and for the encouraging promise of God to assist and accept of you in the discharge of it. " Children are the " gift of God, and the fruit of the womb is his reward." I cannot easily figure to myself any greater earthly blessing than to have children to be the objects of your care and diligence while you live, and to inherit your name and substance, when you yourselves must, in the course of nature, go off the stage. And is it a little honor to be intrusted with the care of these rational creatures of God, born for immortality, and whose present peace and future welfare depend so much on your conduct? Are you not called to prepare members for the church of Christ?— " for of such is his kingdom;" and however important the ministry of the gospel is (which I should be the last to detract from) you may know, that it is out of a minister's power to speak to the understanding of those who are not prepared by previous instruction. But above all, how thankful should you be for the encouragement given you to bring your children to the Saviour, and the promise of his blessing. " He took them up in his arms, laid his

" hands on them and bleſſed them." Fathers! Mothers! What ground of praiſe to the condeſcending Saviour!

(2.) Be early and diligent in inſtruction. This is the great and ſubſtantial evidence you are called to give of your thankfulneſs for the mercy. You have heard that children are much more early capable of receiving benefit by outward means than is commonly ſuppoſed: Let not, therefore, the devil and the world be too far before-hand with you, in poſſeſſing their fancy, engaging their affections, and miſleading their judgment. Is it a fable, or do I ſpeak truth when I ſay, many children learn to ſwear before they learn to pray. It is indeed affecting, to a ſerious mind, to hear children liſping out ill-pronounced oaths, or ſcurrilous and ſcolding abuſe, or even impurities which they do not underſtand; ſo that the firſt ſentiments they form, and the firſt words they utter, are thoſe of impiety, malice, or obſcenity. Nay I have ſeen children in their mother's arms actually taught to ſcold, by uttering angry ſounds, before they could ſpeak one word with diſtinctneſs. It is wholly impoſſible for me here to introduce a ſyſtem of directions as to the method of early inſtruction; this muſt be learned elſewhere and at another time; but I mean to impreſs your minds with a ſenſe of the importance and neceſſity of the duty, and I will add the *efficacy* of it. Remember the connection between the duty and the promiſe—" Train up a child in the way he " ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from " it." I knew a pious and judicious miniſter, who affirmed, that we did not give credit to that part of God's word if we did not believe the certainty of the promiſe, as well as the obligation of the duty; he was of opinion, that every parent, when he ſeemed to fail, ſhould conclude that he himſelf had been undutiful, and not that God had been unfaithful.

(3.) Be circumſpect and edifying in your example. All the arguments that preſs the former exhortation, apply with the ſame, perhaps I may ſay, with double force to this. Example is itſelf the moſt powerful and ſucceſsful inſtruction; and example is neceſſary to give meaning and influence to all other inſtruction. This is

one of the oldeſt maxims upon the ſubject of education;—The Roman ſatyriſt ſays, "Ni'l dictu viſuve fœdum hæc "limina tangat intra quæ puer eſt." Let nothing baſe be ſeen or heard within theſe walls in which a child is. And if children naturally form their ſentiments, habits and manners, by imitation of others in general, how much more powerful muſt be the example of parents, who are every hour in their ſight, whom nature teaches them, and whom duty obliges them to love, and when it comes recommended by the continual intercourſe, and the endearing ſervices that flow from that intimate relation.

(4.) Laſtly, Parents are taught here perſeverance and importunity in prayer. This, indeed, is an important thing upon every ſubject of our requeſts to God. Our Saviour ſpoke a parable on purpoſe to teach men, that they ſhould pray and not faint, Luke xviii. 1. And if we are called to believe, that "if we aſk any thing agree-"able to his will he heareth us," what more agreeable to his will than frequent and importunate prayer for the temporal and ſpiritual happineſs of children—What a ſupport this to the faith of prayer. You ought, at the ſame time, to remember that, as the prophet Jeremiah ſays, "it is good for a man to hope and quietly to wait for the "ſalvation of God." The anſwer of prayer may come at a much greater diſtance than we are apt to look for it. There is a remarkable anecdote handed down to us, reſpecting the famous St. Auguſtine. He was the ſon of an eminently pious woman, whoſe name was Monica, yet he was in his youth very looſe and diſorderly. One of his fellow citizens, it is ſaid, ſeeing him paſs along the ſtreet, reflected upon him with great ſeverity, as a diſgrace to ſociety; but another made anſwer, that he was not without hopes of him after all, for he thought it next to impoſſible that the ſon of ſo many prayers ſhould periſh.—And we know, that in fact, he became in due time one of the moſt eminent champions for evangelical truth. There is not the leaſt doubt that many prayers, and eſpecially of this kind, may have their anſwer and accompliſhment after the believer that offered them has been many years ſleeping in the duſt.

2. The truths above illuſtrated, ſuggeſt important advices to children, that is, to ſuch young perſons as are able to underſtand and apply them. (1.) Preſerve a tenderneſs of heart, and be thankful that you are not yet hardened by habitual guilt, nor ſentenced to perpetual barrenneſs by the judgment of a righteous God. Eſteem, embrace, improve the precious but flying ſeaſon. Hearken to the inſtructions of parents; the admonitions of paſtors; the leſſons of providence, and the dictates of God's holy ſpirit ſpeaking by the conſcience. Think of the amiableneſs of early piety in the ſight of men; and its acceptableneſs in the ſight of God—"I love them that love me," ſays he by his prophet; "and they that ſeek me early ſhall find me."

(2.) Be not ſatisfied with, or truſt in outward privileges. If you are the children of pious parents, who have lived near to God; if you have been favored with early inſtruction, unleſs theſe advantages are improved, they will not plead for, but againſt you at the great day. This is the dictate both of ſcripture and reaſon, "to whomſoever much "is given, of them much will be required." There is a common ſaying, that is neither agreeable to truth nor experience, and yet ſometimes obtains belief in a blinded world, that the children of good people are as bad as any: as if early education, which is of ſo much influence in learning every thing elſe, ſhould have no effect in religion. On the contrary, where do we expect to find pious youth, but in pious families, or ſober and induſtrious youth, but in ſober and induſtrious families? I ſhould call that man prudent in the conduct of life, who in the choice of a ſervant, an apprentice, or a partner in buſineſs, would pay almoſt as much attention to the blood and parentage, as to the perſon with whom he was to be immediately connected. But if we take notice of what probably gave occaſion to the miſtake, viz. that the wicked children of pious parents are the worſt of any, it is a truth of the utmoſt moment, and eaſily accounted for. They burſt aſunder the ſtrongeſt ties, they are under the unhappy neceſſity of maſtering conſcience by high handed wickedneſs, and commonly come to ſpeedy and deſerved ruin: "He that "being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly "be deſtroyed, and that without remedy."

(3.) Do not ſatisfy yourſelves with a name to live while you are dead. Though ſome young perſons, religiouſly educated, by falling into diſſolute ſociety, become open profligates, there are others who retain the form without the life of religion: Therefore, if nature hath given you amiable diſpoſitions; if theſe have been cultivated by a pious and prudent education; if you feel the reſtraint of natural conſcience; if you are deſirous of public praiſe, or afraid of public ſhame, do not neglect any of theſe preſervatives from ſin; but yet endeavor to obtain, and ſee that you be governed by a principle ſuperior to them all, the hope of final acceptance with God through Chriſt. Aſk of him to give you a new heart, and a new ſpirit, to "create you a new in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which "God hath before ordained, that we ſhould walk in them."

In the laſt place, this ſubject ſuggeſts ſome important inſtructions to the hearers of the goſpel in general. (1.) Loſe no time in providing for your great and beſt intereſt. Every argument that tends to ſhew the importance of early piety, may be applied, with equal or greater force, to ſhew the danger of delay in more advanced years. What is wiſe or amiable in youth, is neceſſary to thoſe who are nearer their journey's end. But conſidering myſelf as ſpeaking to profeſſing Chriſtians, what I would earneſtly adviſe you, is, to apply the principles above laid down, to particular purpoſes, as well as to your general conduct. If conſcience or providence has pointed out to you any thing that you may do to advantage, either for yourſelves or others, loſe no time in ſetting about it, becauſe you do not know how little time may be yours: So ſays the wiſe man, Ecc. ix. 10. "Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, "do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, "nor knowledge, nor wiſdom, in the grave whither thou "goeſt."

(2.) Do not forget the improvement of this ſubject, which our Saviour himſelf has pointed out; imitate the temper of children; learn to be humble and teachable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated. Both watch and pray againſt all violent attachments, rude and boiſterous paſſions, and deep rooted reſentment. Obſerve how the lit-

tle lambs lay down their reſentment, and forget their quarrels. Under this particular, it is proper to recommend a decency of deportment, and a contempt of all vanity and affectation, as well as ſimplicity and ſincerity of ſpeech, and a contempt of all artifice and refinement. The apoſtle has given an excellent deſcription of this, 2 Cor. i. 12. " For our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of " our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, " not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we " have had our converſation in the world."

(3.) Set a good example before others in general, but eſpecially young perſons. The old rule, *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia*, ought to be pondered as well as recollected. It is of much importance what our viſible conduct is, at all times and in all places, becauſe we continually contribute to form each others tempers and habits; but greater caution is neceſſary in preſence of young perſons, both becauſe they are moſt prone to imitation, and becauſe they have the leaſt judgment to make proper diſtinctions, or to refuſe the evil, and chooſe the good. Some inſtances might be given, in which things might be ſaid or done, before perſons of full underſtanding, without injury, that could not be done without injury, or at leaſt without danger, before perſons in early life.

(4.) In the laſt place, be not wanting in your endeavors and prayers for the public intereſt of religion, and the proſperity of the Redeemer's kingdom. Support, by your conduct and converſation, the public credit of religion.—What is more powerful over the minds of men and the manners of the age, than public opinion. It is more powerful than the moſt ſanguinary laws. And what is public opinion? It is formed by the ſentiments that are moſt frequently heard, and moſt approved in converſation. Had we a juſt ſenſe of the importance of viſible religion, what a powerful principle would it be of prudent, watchful, guarded conduct in every ſtate and circumſtance of life. Whatever reaſon there may be to complain of the frequency of hypocriſy, or ſeeking the applauſe of men, I am afraid there is no leſs reaſon to complain of the want of attention to that precept of the apoſtle, " Look not

" every man on his own things, but every man alſo on " the things of others;" or of our Lord himſelf, Matt. v. 16. " Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they " may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father which " is in heaven." I apprehend that theſe ſeemingly oppoſite faults, are not always ſeparated, but often found in the ſame perſons; that is to ſay, there may be a ſtrong deſire after, and endeavor to obtain public applauſe by a few ſplendid and popular actions, and yet but little attention to that prudent and exemplary conduct, which promotes public uſefulneſs. Conſider what you have heard, and the Lord give you underſtanding to improve and apply it, for Chriſt's ſake. Amen.

THE DOMINION OF PROVIDENCE OVER THE PASSIONS OF MEN.

A

SERMON,

Preached at Princeton, on the 17th of May, 1776. Being the General Fast appointed by the Congress through the United Colonies. Dedicated to the Hon. John Hancock, Esq. President of the Congress of the United States of America. To which is added, an Address to the natives of Scotland residing in America.

PSALM lxxvi. 10.

Surely the Wrath of Man shall praise thee; the remainder of Wrath shalt thou restain.

THERE is not a greater evidence either of the reality or the power of religion, than a firm belief of God's univerſal preſence, and a conſtant attention to the influence and operation of his providence. It is by this means that the Chriſtian may be ſaid, in the emphatical ſcripture language, "to walk with God, and to endure as ſeeing "him who is inviſible."

The doctrine of divine providence is very full and complete in the ſacred oracles. It extends not only to things

which we may think of great moment, and therefore worthy of notice, but to things the moſt indifferent and inconſiderable; "Are not two ſparrows ſold for a farthing," ſays our Lord, "and one of them falleth not to the ground "without your heavenly Father; nay, the very hairs of "your head are all numbered." It extends not only to things beneficial and ſalutary, or to the direction and aſſiſtance of thoſe who are the ſervants of the living God; but to things ſeemingly moſt hurtful and deſtructive, and to perſons the moſt refractory and diſobedient. He overrules all his creatures, and all their actions. Thus we are told, that "fire, hail, ſnow, vapour, and ſtormy wind, "fulfil his word," in the courſe of nature; and even ſo the moſt impetuous and diſorderly paſſions of men, that are under no reſtraint from themſelves, are yet perfectly ſubject to the dominion of Jehovah. They carry his commiſſion, they obey his orders, they are limited and reſtrained by his authority, and they conſpire with every thing elſe in promoting his glory. There is the greater need to take notice of this, that men are not generally ſufficiently aware of the diſtinction between the law of God and his purpoſe; they are apt to ſuppoſe, that as the temper of the ſinner is contrary to the one, ſo the outrages of the ſinner are able to defeat the other; than which nothing can be more falſe. The truth is plainly aſſerted, and nobly expreſſed by the Pſalmiſt in the text, "Surely the "wrath of man ſhall praiſe thee; the remainder of wrath "ſhalt thou reſtrain."

This pſalm was evidently compoſed as a ſong of praiſe for ſome ſignal victory obtained, which was at the ſame time a remarkable deliverance from threatning danger. The author was one or other of the later prophets, and the occaſion probably the unſucceſsful aſſault of Jeruſalem, by the army of Sennacherib king of Aſſyria, in the days of Hezekiah. Great was the inſolence and boaſting of his generals and ſervants againſt the city of the living God, as may be ſeen in the thirty-ſixth chapter of Iſaiah. Yet it pleaſed God to deſtroy their enemies, and, by his own immediate interpoſition, to grant them deliverance. Therefore the Pſalmiſt ſays in the fifth and ſixth verſes of

this pſalm, " The ſtout hearted are ſpoiled, they have " ſlept their ſleep. None of the men of might have found " their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob! both the " chariot and the horſe are caſt into a deep ſleep." After a few more remarks to the ſame purpoſe, he draws the inference, or makes the reflection in the text, " Surely the " wrath of man ſhall praiſe thee ; the remainder of wrath " ſhalt thou reſtrain : which may be paraphraſed thus, The fury and injuſtice of oppreſſors, ſhall bring in a tribute of praiſe to thee; the influence of thy righteous providence ſhall be clearly diſcerned ; the countenance and ſupport thou wilt give to thine own people ſhall be glorioufly illuſtrated ; thou ſhalt ſet the bounds which the boldeſt cannot paſs.

I am ſenſible, my brethren, that the time and occaſion of this pſalm, may ſeem to be in one reſpect ill ſuited to the intereſting circumſtances of this country at preſent. It was compoſed after the victory was obtained ; whereas we are now but putting on the harneſs, and entering upon an important conteſt, the length of which it is impoſſible to foreſee, and the iſſue of which it will perhaps be thought preſumption to foretell. But as the truth, with reſpect to God's moral government, is the ſame and unchangeable ; as the iſſue, in the caſe of Sennacherib's invaſion, did but lead the prophet to acknowledge it ; our duty and intereſt conſpire in calling upon us to improve it. And I have choſen to inſiſt upon it on this day of ſolemn humiliation, as it will probably help us to a clear and explicit view of what ſhould be the chief ſubject of our prayers and endeavors, as well as the great object of our hope and truſt, in our preſent ſituation.

The truth, then, aſſerted in this text, which I propoſe to illuſtrate and improve, is,—That all the diſorderly paſſions of men whether expoſing the innocent to private injury, or whether they are the arrows of divine judgment in public calamity, ſhall, in the end, be to the praiſe of God: Or, to apply it more particularly to the preſent ſtate of the American Colonies, and the plague of war,— ' The ambition of miſtaken princes, the cunning and cruelty of oppreſſive and corrupt miniſters,

and even the inhumanity of brutal ſoldiers, however dreadful, ſhall finally promote the glory of God, and in the mean time, while the ſtorm continues, his mercy and kindneſs ſhall appear in preſcribing bounds to their rage and fury.

In diſcourſing of this ſubject, it is my intention, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace,

I. To point out to you in ſome particulars, how the wrath of man praiſes God.

II. To apply theſe principles to our preſent ſituation, by inferences of truth for your inſtruction and comfort, and by ſuitable exhortations to duty in the important criſis.

In the *firſt* place, I am to point out to you in ſome particulars, how the wrath of man praiſes God. I ſay in *ſome* inſtances, becauſe it is far from being in my power, either to mention or explain the whole. There is an unſearchable depth in the divine counſels, which it is impoſſible for us to penetrate. It is the duty of every good man to place the moſt unlimited confidence in divine wiſdom, and to believe that thoſe meaſures of providence that are moſt unintelligible to him, are yet planned with the ſame ſkill, and directed to the ſame great purpoſes as others, the reaſon and tendency of which he can explain in the cleareſt manner. But where revelation and experience enables us to diſcover the wiſdom, equity, or mercy of divine providence, nothing can be more delightful or profitable to a ſerious mind, and therefore I beg your attention to the following remarks.

In the firſt place, the wrath of man praiſes God, as it is an example and illuſtration of divine truth, and clearly points out the corruption of our nature, which is the foundation ſtone of the doctrine of redemption. Nothing can be more abſolutely neceſſary to true religion, than a clear and full conviction of the ſinfulneſs of our nature and ſtate. Without this there can be neither repentance in the ſinner, nor humility in the believer. Without this all that is ſaid in ſcripture of the wiſdom and mercy of God, in providing a Saviour, is without force and without meaning. Juſtly does our Saviour ſay, "The whole

" have no need of a phyſician, but thoſe that are ſick. I " came not to call the righteous but ſinners to repentance." Thoſe who are not ſenſible that they are ſinners, will treat every exhortation to repentance, and every offer of mercy, with diſdain or defiance.

But where can we have a more affecting view of the corruption of our nature, than in the wrath of man, when exerting itſelf in oppreſſion, cruelty, and blood. It muſt be owned, indeed, that this truth is abundantly manifeſt in times of the greateſt tranquillity. Others may, if they pleaſe, treat the corruption of our nature as a chimera: for my part, I ſee it every where, and I feel it every day. All the diſorders in human ſociety, and the greateſt part even of the unhappineſs we are expoſed to, ariſes from the envy, malice, covetouſneſs, and other luſts of man. If we and all about us were juſt what we ought to be in all reſpects, we ſhould not need to go any further for heaven, for it would be upon earth. But war and violence preſent a ſpectacle, ſtill more awful. How affecting is it to think, that the luſt of domination ſhould be ſo violent and univerſal? That men ſhould ſo rarely be ſatisfied with their own poſſeſſions and acquiſitions, or even with the benefit that would ariſe from mutual ſervice, but ſhould look upon the happineſs and tranquillity of others, as an obſtruction to their own. That, as if the great law of nature, were not enough, " Duſt thou art, and to duſt thou " ſhalt return," they ſhould be ſo furiouſly ſet for the deſtruction of each other. It is ſhocking to think, ſince the firſt murder of Abel by his brother Cain, what havock has been made of man by man in every age. What is it that fills the pages of hiſtory, but the wars and contentions of princes and empires? What vaſt numbers has lawleſs ambition brought into the field, and delivered as a prey to the deſtructive ſword?

If we dwell a little upon the circumſtances, they become deeply affecting. The mother bears a child with pain, rears him by the laborious attendance of many years; yet in the prime of life, in the vigor of health, and bloom of beauty, in a moment he is cut down by the dreadful inſtruments of death. " Every battle of the warrior is with

" confuſed noiſe, and garments rolled in blood ;" but the horror of the ſcene is not confined to the field of ſlaughter. Few go there unrelated, or fall unlamented ; in every hoſtile encounter, what muſt be the impreſſion upon the relations of the deceaſed ? The bodies of the dead can only be ſeen, or the cries of the dying heard for a ſingle day, but many days ſhall not put an end to the mourning of a parent for a beloved ſon, the joy and ſupport of his age, or of the widow and helpleſs offſpring for a father, taken away in the fullneſs of health and vigor.

But if this may be juſtly ſaid of all wars between man and man, what ſhall we be able to ſay that is ſuitable to the abhorred ſcene of civil war between citizen and citizen ? How deeply affecting is it, that thoſe who are the ſame in complexion, the ſame in blood, in language, and in religion, ſhould, notwithſtanding, butcher one another with unrelenting rage, and glory in the deed ? That men ſhould lay waſte the fields of their fellow ſubjects, with whoſe proviſion they themſelves had been often fed, and conſume with devouring fire thoſe houſes, in which they had often found a hoſpitable ſhelter.

Theſe things are apt to overcome a weak mind with fear, or overwhelm it with ſorrow, and in the greateſt number are apt to excite the higheſt indignation, and kindle up a ſpirit of revenge. If this laſt has no other tendency than to direct and invigorate the meaſures of ſelf-defence, I do not take upon me to blame it, on the contrary, I call it neceſſary and laudable.

But what I mean at this time to prove by the preceding reflections, and wiſh to impreſs on your minds, is the depravity of our nature. James iv. 1. " From whence come " wars and fighting among you, come they not hence even " from your luſts that war in your members." Men of lax and corrupt principles, take great delight in ſpeaking to the praiſe of human nature, and extolling its dignity, without diſtinguiſhing what it was, at its firſt creation, from what it is in its preſent fallen ſtate. Theſe fine ſpeculations are very grateful to a worldly mind. They are alſo much more pernicious to uncautious and unthinking youth, than even the temptations to a diſſolute and ſenſu-

al life, againſt which they are fortified by the dictates of natural conſcience, and a ſenſe of public ſhame. But I appeal from theſe viſionary reaſonings to the hiſtory of all ages, and the inflexible teſtimony of daily experience. Theſe will tell us what men have been in their practice, and from thence you may judge what they are by nature, while unrenewed. If I am not miſtaken, a cool and candid attention, either to the paſt hiſtory, or preſent ſtate of the world, but above all, to the ravages of lawleſs power, ought to humble us in the duſt. It ſhould at once lead us to acknowledge the juſt view given us in ſcripture, of our loſt ſtate; to deſire the happy influence of renewing grace each for ourſelves; and to long for the dominion of righteouſneſs and peace, when "men ſhall beat their ſwords "into plow ſhares, and their ſpears into pruning hooks; "when nation ſhall not lift up ſword againſt nation, nei- "ther ſhall they learn war any more."* Mic. iv. 3.

* I cannot help embracing this opportunity of making a remark or two upon a virulent reflection thrown out againſt this doctrine in a well known pamphlet, *Common Sense*. The author of that work expreſſes himſelf thus: "If the firſt king of any country was by elec- "tion, that likewiſe eſtabliſhes a precedent for the next; for to ſay, "that the right of all future generations is taken away, by the act of "the firſt electors, in their choice not only of a king, but of a family "of kings forever, hath no parallel in or out of ſcripture, but the "doctrine of original ſin, which ſuppoſes the free will of all men loſt "in Adam; and from ſuch compariſon, and it will admit of no "other, hereditary ſucceſſion can derive no glory. For as in Adam "all ſinned, and as in the firſt electors all men obeyed; as in the one "all mankind were ſubjected to Satan, and in the other to ſovereign- "ty; as our innocence was loſt in the firſt, and our authority in the "laſt; and as both diſable us from re-aſſuming ſome former ſtate and "privilege, it unanſwerably follows that original ſin and hereditary "ſucceſſion are parallels. Diſhonorable rank! Inglorious connection! "Yet the moſt ſubtle ſophiſt cannot produce a juſter ſimile."* Without the ſhadow of reaſoning, he is pleaſed to repreſent the doctrine of original ſin as an object of contempt or abhorrence. I beg leave to demur a little to the *candor*, the *prudence*, and the *juſtice* of this proceeding.

1. Was it *modeſt* or *candid* for a perſon without name or character, to talk in this ſupercilious manner of a doctrine that has been eſ-

* *Common Sense, page* 11. *Bradford's Edition.*

2. The wrath of man praiſeth God, as it is the inſtrument in his hand for bringing ſinners to repentance, and for the correction and improvement of his own children. Whatever be the nature of the affliction with which he viſits either perſons, families, or nations; whatever be the diſpoſition or intention of thoſe whoſe malice he employs as a ſcourge, the deſign on his part is, to rebuke men for iniquity, to bring them to repentance, and to promote their holineſs and peace. The ſalutary nature, and ſanctifying influence of affliction in general, is often taken notice of in ſcripture, both as making a part of the purpoſe of God, and the experience of his ſaints. Heb. xii. 11. "Now, no affliction for the preſent ſeemeth to be joyous, "but grievous: Nevertheleſs afterwards it yieldeth the "peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs unto them, which are ex-

pouſed and defended by many of the greateſt and beſt men that the world ever ſaw, and makes an eſſential part of the eſtabliſhed Creeds and Confeſſions of all the Proteſtant churches without exception? I thought the grand modern plea had been freedom of ſentiment, and charitable thoughts of one another. Are ſo many of us, then, beyond the reach of this gentleman's charity? I do aſſure him that ſuch preſumption and ſelf-confidence are no recommendation to me either of his character or ſentiments.

2. Was it *prudent*, when he was pleading a public cauſe, to ſpeak in ſuch opprobrious terms of a doctrine, which he knew or ought to have known was believed and profeſſed by, I ſuppoſe, a great majority of very different denominations. Is this gentleman ignorant of human nature, as well as an enemy to the Chriſtian faith? Are men ſo little tenacious of their religious ſentiments, whether true or falſe? The prophet thought otherwiſe, who ſaid, *Hath a nation changed their gods which yet are no gods?* Was it the way to obtain the favor of the public, to deſpiſe what they hold ſacred? Or ſhall we ſuppoſe this author ſo aſtoniſhingly ignorant, as to think that all men now, whoſe favor is worth aſking, have given up the doctrine of the New Teſtament. If he does, he is greatly miſtaken.

3. In fine, I aſk, where was the *juſtice* of this proceeding? Is there ſo little to be ſaid for the doctrine of original ſin, that it is not to be refuted, but deſpiſed? Is the ſtate of the world ſuch, as to render this doctrine not only falſe, but incredible? Has the fruit been of ſuch a quality as to exclude all doubts of the goodneſs of the tree? On the contrary, I cannot help being of opinion, that ſuch has been the viſible ſtate of the world in every age, as cannot be accounted for on any other principles, than what we learn from the word of God, that *the imagination of the heart of man is only evil from his youth, and that continually.* Gen. vi. 5.—viii. 21.

" erciſed thereby." But what we are particularly led to obſerve by the ſubject of this diſcourſe is, that the wrath of man, or the violence of the oppreſſor praiſeth God in this reſpect; for it has a peculiar tendency to alarm the ſecure conſcience, to convince and humble the obſtinate ſinner. This is plain from the nature of the thing, and from the teſtimony of experience. Public calamities, particularly the deſtroying ſword, is ſo awful that it cannot but have a powerful influence in leading men to conſider the preſence and the power of God. It threatens them not only in themſelves, but touches them in all that is dear to them, whether relations or poſſeſſions. The prophet Iſaiah ſays, Iſ. xxvi. 8, 9. " Yea, in the way of thy " judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee,—for " when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of " the world will learn righteouſneſs." He conſiders it as the moſt powerful mean of alarming the ſecure and ſubduing the obſtinate. Iſ. xxvi. 11. " Lord when thy hand is " lifted up, they will not ſee, but they ſhall ſee and be " aſhamed for their envy at the people, yea the fire of " thine enemies ſhall devour them." It is alſo ſometimes repreſented as a ſymptom of a hopeleſs and irrecoverable ſtate, when public judgments have no effect. Thus ſays the prophet Jeremiah, Jer. v. 3. " O Lord, are not thine " eyes upon the truth? thou haſt ſtricken them, but they " have not grieved; thou haſt conſumed them, but they have " refuſed to receive correction: they have made their fa- " ces harder than a rock, they have refuſed to return." We can eaſily ſee in the hiſtory of the children of Iſrael, how ſevere ſtrokes brought them to ſubmiſſion and penitence. Pſ. lxxviii. 34, 35. " When he ſlew them, then they " ſought him, and they returned and inquired early after " God, and they remembered that God was their rock, " and the high God their redeemer."

Both nations in general, and private perſons are apt to grow remiſs and lax in a time of proſperity and ſeeming ſecurity; but when their earthly comforts are endangered or withdrawn, it lays them under a kind of neceſſity to ſeek for ſomething better in their place. Men muſt have comfort from one quarter or another. When earthly

things are in a pleaſing and promiſing condition, too many are apt to find their reſt, and be ſatisfied with them as their only portion. But when the vanity and paſſing nature of all created comfort is diſcovered, they are compelled to look for ſomething more durable as well as valuable. What therefore, can be more to the praiſe of God, than that when a whole people have forgotten their reſting place, when they have abuſed their privileges, and deſpiſed their mercies, they ſhould by diſtreſs and ſuffering be made to hearken to the rod, and return to their duty.

There is an inexpreſſible depth and variety in the judgments of God, as in all his other works; but we may lay down this as a certain principle, that if there were no ſin, there could be no ſuffering. Therefore they are certainly for the correction of ſin, or for the trial, illuſtration, and perfecting of the grace and virtue of his own people. We are not to ſuppoſe, that thoſe who ſuffer moſt, or who ſuffer ſooneſt, are therefore more criminal than others. Our Saviour himſelf thought it neceſſary to give a caution againſt this raſh concluſion, as we are informed by the evangeliſt Luke, Luke xiii. 1. "There were preſent at that ſeaſon "ſome that told him of the Galileans, whoſe blood Pilate "had mingled with their ſacrifices. And Jeſus anſwering "ſaid unto them, Suppoſe ye that theſe Galileans were "ſinners above all the Galileans, becauſe they ſuffered "ſuch things, I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye "ſhall all likewiſe periſh." I ſuppoſe we may ſay with ſufficient warrant, that it often happens, that thoſe for whom God hath deſigns of the greateſt mercy, are firſt brought to the trial, that they may enjoy in due time, the ſalutary effect of the unpalatable medicine.

I muſt alſo take leave to obſerve, and I hope no pious humble ſufferer will be unwilling to make the application, that there is often a diſcernible mixture of ſoverignty and righteouſneſs in providential diſpenſations. It is the prerogative of God to do what he will with his own, but he often diſplays his juſtice itſelf, by throwing into the furnace thoſe, who, though they may not be viſibly worſe than others, may yet have more to anſwer for, as having been favored with more diſtinguiſhed privileges, both civil and

facred. It is impoſſible for us to make a juſt and full compariſon of the character either of perſons or nations, and it would be extremely fooliſh for any to attempt it, either for increaſing their own ſecurity, or impeaching the juſtice of the Supreme Ruler. Let us therefore neither forget the truth, nor go beyond it. "His mercy fills the earth." He is alſo "known by the judgment which he executeth." The wrath of man in its moſt tempeſtuous rage, fulfills his will, and finally promotes the good of his choſen.

3. The wrath of man praiſeth God, as he ſets bounds to it, or reſtrains it by his providence, and ſometimes makes it evidently a mean of promoting and illuſtrating his glory.

There is no part of divine providence in which a greater beauty and majeſty appears, than when the Almighty Ruler turns the councils of wicked men into confuſion, and makes them militate againſt themſelves. If the pſalmiſt may be thought to have had a view in this text to the truths illuſtrated in the two former obſervations, there is no doubt at all that he had a particular view to this, as he ſays in the latter part of the verſe, "the remainder of wrath ſhalt thou reſtrain." The ſcripture abounds with inſtances, in which the deſigns of oppreſſors were either wholly diſappointed, or in execution fell far ſhort of the malice of their intention, and in ſome they turned out to the honor and happineſs of the perſons or the people, whom they were intended to deſtroy. We have an inſtance of the firſt of theſe in the hiſtory to which my text relates.* We have alſo an inſtance in Eſther, in which the moſt miſchievous deſigns of Haman, the ſon of Hamedatha the Agagite againſt Mordecai the Jew, and the nation from which he ſprung, turned out at laſt to his own deſtruction, the honor of Mordecai, and the ſalvation and peace of his people.

From the New Teſtament I will make choice of that memorable event on which the ſalvation of believers in every age reſts as its foundation, the death and ſufferings of the Son of God. This the great adverſary and all his

* The matter is fully ſtated and reaſoned upon by the prophet Iſaiah ch. x. from the 5th to the 19th verſe.

agents and inſtruments proſecuted with unrelenting rage. When they had blackened him with ſlander, when they ſcourged him with ſhame, when they had condemned him in judgment, and nailed him to the croſs, how could they help eſteeming their victory complete? But oh the unſearcheable wiſdom of God! they were but perfecting the great deſign laid for the ſalvation of ſinners. Our bleſſed Redeemer by his death finiſhed his work, overcame principalities and powers, and made a ſhew of them openly, triumphing over them in his croſs. With how much juſtice do the apoſtles and their company offer this doxology to God, "They lift up their voice with one ac- "cord, and ſaid, Lord thou art God which haſt made hea- "ven and earth, and the ſea, and all that in them is; "Who by the mouth of thy ſervant David haſt ſaid, Why "did the Heathen rage, and the people imagine vain "things. The kings of the earth ſtood up, and the rulers "were gathered together againſt the Lord, and againſt his "Chriſt. For of a truth, againſt thy holy Child Jeſus, "whom thou haſt anointed both Herod and Pontius Pi- "late, with the Gentiles, and the people of Iſrael were "gathered together, for to do whatſoever thy hand and thy "counſel determined before to be done." Acts iv. 24. 28.

In all after ages in conformity to this, the deepeſt laid contrivances of the prince of darkneſs, have turned out to the confuſion of their author; and I know not, but conſidering his malice and pride, this perpetual diſappointment, and the ſuperiority of divine wiſdom, may be one great ſource of his ſuffering and torment. The croſs hath ſtill been the banner of truth, under which it hath been carried through the world. Perſecution has been but as the furnace to the gold to purge it of its droſs, to manifeſt its purity, and increaſe its luſtre. It was taken notice of very early, that the blood of the martyrs was the ſeed of chriſtianity; the more abundantly it was ſhed, the more plentifully did the harveſt grow.

So certain has this appeared, that the moſt violent infidels, both of early and later ages, have endeavored to account for it, and have obſerved that there is a ſpirit of obſtinacy in man which inclines him to reſiſt violence, and

that ſeverity doth but increaſe oppoſition, be the cauſe what it will. They ſuppoſe that perſecution is equally proper to propagate truth and error. This though in part true, will by no means generally hold. Such an apprehenſion however gave occaſion to a glorious triumph of divine providence of an oppoſite kind, which I muſt ſhortly relate to you. One of the Roman emperors, Julian, ſurnamed the apoſtate, perceiving how impoſſible it was to ſuppreſs the goſpel by violence, endeavored to extinguiſh it by neglect and ſcorn. He left the Chriſtians unmoleſted for ſometime, but gave all manner of encouragement to thoſe of oppoſite principles, and particularly to the Jews, out of hatred to the Chriſtians; and that he might bring public diſgrace upon the Galileans, as he affected to ſtile them, he encouraged the Jews to rebuild the temple of Jeruſalem, and viſibly refute the prophecy of Chriſt, that it ſhould lie under perpetual deſolation. But this profane attempt was ſo ſignally fruſtrated, that it ſerved as much as any one circumſtance to ſpread the glory of our Redeemer, and eſtabliſh the faith of his ſaints. It is affirmed by ſome ancient authors, particularly by Ammianus Marcellinus, a heathen hiſtorian, that fire came out of the earth and conſumed the workmen when laying the foundation. But in whatever way it was prevented, it is beyond all controverſy, from the concurring teſtimony of Heathens and Chriſtians, that little or no progreſs was ever made in it, and that in a ſhort time, it was entirely defeated.

It is proper here to obſerve that at the time of the reformation, when religion began to revive, nothing contributed more to facilitate its reception, and increaſe its progreſs than the violence of its perſecutors. Their cruelty and the patience of the ſufferers, naturally diſpoſed men to examine and weigh the cauſe to which they adhered with ſo much conſtancy and reſolution. At the ſame time alſo, when they were perſecuted in one city, they fled to another, and carried the diſcoveries of Popiſh fraud to every part of the world. It was by ſome of thoſe who were perſecuted in Germany, that the light of the reformation was brought ſo early into Britain.

The power of divine providence appears with the moſt diſtinguiſhed luſtre, when ſmall and inconſiderable circumſtances, and ſometimes, the weather and ſeaſons have defeated the moſt formidable armaments, and fruſtrated the beſt concerted expeditions. Near two hundred years ago, the monarchy of Spain was in the height of its power and glory, and determined to cruſh the intereſt of the reformation. They ſent out a powerful armament againſt Britain, giving it oſtentatiouſly, and in my opinion profanely, the name of the Invincible Armada. But it pleaſed God ſo entirely to diſcomfit it by tempeſts, that a ſmall part of it returned home, though no Britiſh force had been oppoſed to it at all.

We have a remarkable inſtance of the influence of ſmall circumſtances in providence in the Engliſh hiſtory. The two moſt remarkable perſons in the civil wars, had earneſtly deſired to withdraw themſelves from the contentions of the times, Mr. Hampden and Oliver Cromwell. They had actually taken their paſſage in a ſhip for New-England, when by an arbitrary order of council they were compelled to remain at home. The conſequence of this was, that one of them was the ſoul of the republican oppoſition to monarchical uſurpation during the civil wars, and the other in the courſe of that conteſt, was the great inſtrument in bringing the tyrant to the block.

The only other hiſtorical remark I am to make, is, that the violent perſecution which many eminent Chriſtians met with in England from their brethren, who called themſelves Proteſtants, drove them in great numbers to a diſtant part of the world, where the light of the goſpel and true religion were unknown. Some of the American ſettlements, particularly thoſe in New-England, were chiefly made by them; and as they carried the knowledge of Chriſt to the dark places of the earth, ſo they continue themſelves in as great a degree of purity of faith, and ſtrictneſs of practice, or rather a greater than is to be found in any proteſtant church now in the world. Does not the wrath of man in this inſtance praiſe God? Was not the accuſer of the brethren, who ſtirs up their enemies, thus taken in his own craftineſs, and his king-

dom ſhaken by the very means which he employed to eſtabliſh it.*

II. I proceed now to the ſecond general head, which was to apply the principles illuſtrated above to our preſent ſituation, by inferences of truth for your inſtruction and comfort, and by ſuitable exhortations to duty in this important criſis. And,

In the firſt place, I would take the opportunity on this occaſion, and from this ſubject, to preſs every hearer to a ſincere concern for his own ſoul's ſalvation. There are times when the mind may be expected to be more awake to divine truth, and the conſcience more open to the arrows of conviction than at others. A ſeaſon of public judgment is of this kind, as appears from what has been already ſaid. That curioſity and attention at leaſt are raiſed in ſome degree is plain from the unuſual throng of this aſſembly. Can you have a clearer view of the ſinfulneſs of your nature, than when the rod of the oppreſſor is lifted up, and when you ſee men putting on the habit of the warrior, and collecting on every hand the weapons of hoſtility and inſtruments of death? I do not blame your ardor in preparing for the reſolute defence of your temporal rights. But conſider I beſeech you, the truly infinite importance of the ſalvation of your ſouls. Is it of much moment whether you and your children ſhall be rich or poor, at liberty or in bonds? Is it of much moment whether this beautiful country ſhall increaſe in fruitfulneſs from year to year being cultivated by active induſtry, and poſſeſſed by independent freemen, or the ſcanty produce of the neglected fields ſhall be eaten up by hungry publicans, while the timid owner trembles at the tax gatherers approach? And is it of leſs moment my brethren, whether you ſhall be the heirs of glory or the heirs of hell?

* Leſt this ſhould be thought a temporizing compliment to the people of New-England, who have been the firſt ſufferers in the preſent conteſt, and have ſet ſo noble an example of invincible fortitude, in withſtanding the violence of oppreſſion, I think it proper to obſerve that the whole paragraph is copied from a ſermon on Pſal. lxxiv. 22. preached and printed in Scotland, in the month of Auguſt, 1758.

Is your ſtate on earth for a few fleeting years of ſo much moment? And is it of leſs moment, what ſhall be your ſtate through endleſs ages? Have you aſſembled together willingly to hear what ſhall be ſaid on public affairs, and to join in imploring the bleſſing of God on the councils and arms of the united colonies, and can you be unconcerned, what ſhall become of you for ever, when all the monuments of human greatneſs ſhall be laid in aſhes, for "the earth *itself* and all the works that are therein ſhall "be burnt up."

Wherefore my beloved hearers, as the miniſtry of reconciliation is committed to me, I beſeech you in the moſt earneſt manner, to attend to "the things that belong to "your peace, before they are hid from your eyes." How ſoon and in what manner a ſeal ſhall be ſet upon the character and ſtate of every perſon here preſent, it is impoſſible to know; for he who only can know does not think proper to reveal it. But you may reſt aſſured that there is no time more ſuitable, and there is none ſo ſafe as that which is preſent, ſince it is wholly uncertain whether any other ſhall be yours. Thoſe who ſhall firſt fall in battle, have not many more warnings to receive. There are ſome few daring and hardened ſinners who deſpiſe eternity itſelf, and ſet their Maker at defiance, but the far greater number by ſtaving off their convictions to a more convenient ſeaſon, have been taken unprepared, and thus eternally loſt. I would therefore earneſtly preſs the apoſtles exhortation, 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. "We then, as workers together with him, beſeech you "alſo, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain: For "he ſaith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in "the day of ſalvation have I ſuccoured thee: Behold, now "is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of ſalvation."

Suffer me to beſeech you, or rather to give you warning not to reſt ſatisfied with a form of godlineſs, denying the power thereof. There can be no true religion, till there be a diſcovery of your loſt ſtate by nature and practice, and an unfeigned acceptance of Chriſt Jeſus, as he is offered in the goſpel. Unhappy they who either deſpiſe his mercy, or are aſhamed of his croſs! Believe it, "there is no

" ſalvation in any other. There is no other name under " heaven given amongſt men by which we muſt be ſaved." Unleſs you are united to him by a lively faith, not the reſentment of a haughty monarch, but the ſword of divine juſtice hangs over you, and the fulneſs of divine vengeance ſhall ſpeedily overtake you. I do not ſpeak this only to the heaven daring profligate, or grovelling ſenſualiſt, but to every inſenſible ſecure ſinner; to all thoſe however decent and orderly in their civil deportment, who live to themſelves and have their part and portion in this life; in fine to all who are yet in a ſtate of nature, for " except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the " kingdom of God." The fear of man may make you hide your profanity; prudence and experience may make you abhor intemperance and riot; as you advance in life, one vice may ſupplant another and hold its place; but nothing leſs than the ſovereign grace of God can produce a ſaving change of heart and temper, or fit you for his immediate preſence.

2. From what has been ſaid upon this ſubject, you may ſee what ground there is to give praiſe to God for his favors already beſtowed on us, reſpecting the public cauſe. It would be a criminal inattention not to obſerve the ſingular interpoſition of providence hitherto, in behalf of the American colonies. It is however impoſſible for me in a ſingle diſcourſe, as well as improper at this time to go through every ſtep of our paſt tranſactions, I muſt therefore content myſelf with a few remarks. How many diſcoveries have been made of the deſigns of enemies in Britain and among ourſelves, in a manner as unexpected to us as to them, and in ſuch ſeaſon as to prevent their effect? What ſurpriſing ſucceſs has attended our encounters in almoſt every inſtance? Has not the boaſted diſciple of regular and veteran ſoldiers been turned into confuſion and diſmay, before the new and maiden courage of freemen, in defence of their property and right? In what great mercy has blood been ſpared on the ſide of this injured country? Some important victories in the ſouth have been gained with ſo little loſs, that enemies will probably think it has been diſſembled; as many, even of ourſelves thought, till

time rendered it undeniable. But theſe were comparatively of ſmall moment. The ſignal advantage we have gained by the evacuation of Boſton, and the ſhameful flight of the army and navy of Britain, was brought about without the loſs of a man. To all this we may add, that the counſels of our enemies have been viſibly confounded, ſo that I believe I may ſay with truth, that there is hardly any ſtep which they have taken, but it has operated ſtrongly againſt themſelves, and been more in our favor, than if they had followed a contrary courſe.

While we give praiſe to God the ſupreme diſpoſer of all events, for his interpoſition in our behalf, let us guard againſt the dangerous error of truſting in, or boaſting of an arm of fleſh. I could earneſtly wiſh, that while our arms are crowned with ſucceſs, we might content ourſelves with a modeſt aſcription of it to the power of the Higheſt. It has given me great uneaſineſs to read ſome oſtentatious, vaunting expreſſions in our news papers, though happily I think, much reſtrained of late. Let us not return to them again. If I am not miſtaken, not only the holy ſcriptures in general, and the truths of the glorious goſpel in particular, but the whole courſe of providence ſeems intended to abaſe the pride of man, and lay the vain-glorious in the duſt. How many inſtances does hiſtory furniſh us with of thoſe who after exulting over, and deſpiſing their enemies, were ſignally and ſhamefully defeated.* The truth is, I believe, the remark may be applied univerſally, and we may ſay, that through the whole frame of nature, and the whole ſyſtem of human life, that which promiſes moſt, performs the leaſt. The flowers of fineſt colour ſeldom have the ſweeteſt fragrance. The trees of quickeſt groweth or faireſt form, are ſeldom of the greateſt value or duration. Deep waters move with leaſt noiſe. Men who think moſt are ſeldom talkative. And I think it holds as much in war as in any thing, that every boaſter is a coward.

* There is no ſtory better known in Britiſh hiſtory, than that the officers of the French army the night preceding the battle of Agincourt, played at dice for Engliſh priſoners before they took them, and the next day were taken by them.

Pardon me, my brethren, for insisting so much upon this, which may seem but an immaterial circumstance. It is in my opinion of very great moment. I look upon ostentation and confidence to be a sort of outrage upon Providence, and when it becomes general, and infuses itself into the spirit of a people, it is a forerunner of destruction. How does Goliah the champion, armed in a most formidable manner, express his disdain of David the stripling with his sling and his stone. 1 Sam. xvii. 42, 43, 44, 45. "And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, "he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, "and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto "David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? "And the Philistine cursed David by his gods, and the "Philistine said to David, come to me, and I will give "thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of "the field." But how just and modest the reply? "Then "said David to the Philistine, thou comest to me with a "sword and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come "unto thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of "the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." I was well pleased with a remark of this kind thirty years ago in a pamphlet,* in which it was observed, that there was a great deal of profane ostentation in the names given to ships of war, as the Victory, the Valiant, the Thunderer, the Dreadnought, the Terrible, the Firebrand, the Furnace, the Lightning, the Infernal, and many more of the same kind. This the author considered as a symptom of the national character and manners very unfavorable, and not likely to obtain the blessing of the God of Heaven.†

* Britain's Remembrancer.

† I am sensible that one or two of these were ships taken from the French, which brought their names with them. But the greatest number had their names imposed in England, and I cannot help observing, that the Victory often celebrated as the finest ship ever built in Britain, was lost in the night without a storm, by some unknown accident, and about twelve hundred persons, many of them of the first families in the nation, were buried with it in the deep. I do not mean to infer any thing from this, but, that we ought to live under the practical persuasion of what no man will doctrinally deny, that there is no warring

3. From what has been ſaid you may learn what encouragement you have to put your truſt in God, and hope for his aſſiſtance in the preſent important conflict. He is the Lord of hoſts, great in might, and ſtrong in battle. Whoever hath his countenance and approbation, ſhall have the beſt at laſt. I do not mean to ſpeak prophetically, but agreeably to the analogy of faith, and the principles of God's moral government. Some have obſerved that true religion, and in her train dominion, riches, literature, and arts, have taken their courſe in a ſlow and gradual manner, from eaſt to weſt ſince the earth was ſettled after the flood, and from thence forebode the future glory of America. I leave this as a matter rather of conjecture than certainty, but obſerve, that if your cauſe is juſt,—if your principles are pure,—and if your conduct is prudent, you need not fear the multitude of oppoſing hoſts.

If your cauſe is juſt—you may look with confidence to the Lord and intreat him to plead it as his own. You are all my witneſſes, that this is the firſt time of my introducing any political ſubject into the pulpit. At this ſeaſon however, it is not only lawful but neceſſary, and I willingly embrace the opportunity of declaring my opinion without any heſitation, that the cauſe in which America is now in arms, is the cauſe of juſtice, of liberty, and of human nature. So far as we have hitherto proceeded, I am ſatisfied that the confederacy of the colonies, has not been the effect of pride, reſentment, or ſedition, but of a deep and general conviction, that our civil and religious liberties, and conſequently in a great meaſure the temporal and eternal happineſs of us and our poſterity depended on the iſſue. The knowledge of God and his truths have from the beginning of the world been chiefly, if not entirely confined to theſe parts of the earth, where ſome degree of liberty and political juſtice were to be ſeen, and great were the difficulties with which they had to ſtruggle

with the elements, or him who directs their force; that he is able to write diſappointment on the wiſeſt human ſchemes, and by the word of his power to fruſtrate the efforts of the greateſt monarch upon earth.

from the imperfection of human ſociety, and the unjuſt deciſions of uſurped authority. There is not a ſingle inſtance in hiſtory in which civil liberty was loſt, and religious liberty preſerved entire. If therefore we yield up our temporal property, we at the ſame time deliver the conſcience into bondage.

You ſhall not, my brethren, hear from me in the pulpit, what you have never heard from me in converſation, I mean railing at the king perſonally, or even his miniſters and the parliament, and people of Britain, as ſo many barbarous ſavages. Many of their actions have probably been worſe than their intentions. That they ſhould deſire unlimited dominion if they can obtain or preſerve it, is neither new nor wonderful. I do not refuſe ſubmiſſion to their unjuſt claims, becauſe they are corrupt or profligate, although probably many of them are ſo, but becauſe they are men, and therefore liable to all the ſelfiſh bias inſeparable from human nature. I call this claim unjuſt of making laws to bind us in all caſes whatſoever, becauſe they are ſeparated from us, independent of us, and have an intereſt in oppoſing us. Would any man who could prevent it, give up his eſtate, perſon, and family, to the diſpoſal of his neighbor, although he had liberty to chuſe the wiſeſt and the beſt maſter? Surely not. This is the true and proper hinge of the controverſy between Great-Britain and America. It is however to be added, that ſuch is their diſtance from us, that a wiſe and prudent adminiſtration of our affairs is as impoſſible as the claim of authority is unjuſt. Such is and muſt be their ignorance of the ſtate of things here, ſo much time muſt elapſe before an error can be ſeen and remedied, and ſo much injuſtice and partiality muſt be expected from the arts and miſrepreſentation of intereſted perſons, that for theſe colonies to depend wholly upon the legiſlature of Great-Britain, would be like many other oppreſſive connexions, injury to the maſter, and ruin to the ſlave.

The management of the war itſelf on their part, would furniſh new proof of this, if any were needful. Is it not manifeſt with what abſurdity and impropriety they have

conducted their own designs? We had nothing so much to fear as dissension, and they have by wanton and unnecessary cruelty forced us into union. At the same time to let us see what we have to expect, and what would be the fatal consequence of unlimited submission, they have uniformly called those acts *Lenity*, which filled this whole continent with resentment and horror. The ineffable disdain expressed by our fellow subject, in saying, 'That 'he would not hearken to America, till she was at his 'feet;' has armed more men, and inspired more deadly rage, than could have been done by laying waste a whole province with fire and sword. Again, we wanted not numbers, but time, and they sent over handful after handful, till we were ready to oppose a multitude greater than they have to send. In fine, if there was one place stronger than the rest, and more able and willing to resist, there they made the attack, and left the others till they were duly informed, completely incensed, and fully furnished with every instrument of war.

I mention these things, my brethren, not only as grounds of confidence in God, who can easily overthrow the wisdom of the wise, but as decisive proofs of the impossibility of these great and growing states, being safe and happy when every part of their internal polity is dependant on Great-Britain. If, on account of their distance, and ignorance of our situation, they could not conduct their own quarrel with propriety for one year, how can they give direction and vigor to every department of our civil constitutions from age to age? There are fixed bounds to every human thing. When the branches of a tree grow very large and weighty they fall off from the trunk. The sharpest sword will not pierce when it cannot reach. And there is a certain distance from the seat of government, where an attempt to rule will either produce tyranny and helpless subjection, or provoke resistance and effect a separation.

I have said, if your principles are pure—The meaning of this is, if your present opposition to the claims of the British ministry does not arise from a seditious and turbulent spirit, or a wan on contempt of legal authority; from

a blind and factious attachment to particular persons or parties; or from a selfish rapacious disposition, and a desire to turn public confusion to private profit—but from a concern for the interest of your country, and the safety of yourselves and your posterity. On this subject I cannot help observing, that though it would be a miracle if there were not many selfish persons among us, and discoveries now and then made of mean and interested transactions, yet they have been comparatively inconsiderable both in number and effect. In general, there has been so great a degree of public spirit, that we have much more reason to be thankful for its vigor and prevalence, than to wonder at the few appearances of dishonesty or disaffection. It would be very uncandid to ascribe the universal ardor that has prevailed among all ranks of men, and the spirited exertions in the most distant colonies to any thing else than public spirit. Nor was there ever perhaps in history so general a commotion from which religious differences have been so entirely excluded. Nothing of this kind has as yet been heard, except of late in the absurd, but malicious and detestable attempts of our few remaining enemies to introduce them. At the same time I must also for the honor of this country observe, that though government in the ancient forms has been so long unhinged, and in some colonies not sufficient care taken to substitute another in its place; yet has there been, by common consent, a much greater degree of order and public peace, than men of reflexion and experience foretold or expected. From all these circumstances I conclude favorably of the principles of the friends of liberty, and do earnestly exhort you to adopt and act upon those which have been described, and resist the influence of every other.

Once more, if to the justice of your cause, and the purity of your principles, you add prudence in your conduct, there will be the greatest reason to hope, by the blessing of God, for prosperity and success. By prudence in conducting this important struggle, I have chiefly in view union, firmness, and patience. Every body must perceive the absolute necessity of union. It is indeed in every body's mouth, and therefore instead of attempting to

convince you of its importance, I will only caution you againſt the uſual cauſes of diviſion. If perſons of every rank, inſtead of implicitly complying with the orders of thoſe whom they themſelves have choſen to direct, will needs judge every meaſure over again, when it comes to be put in execution. If different claſſes of men intermix their little private views, or claſhing intereſt with public affairs, and marſhal into parties, the merchant againſt the landholder, and the landholder againſt the merchant. If local provincial pride and jealouſy ariſe, and you allow yourſelves to ſpeak with contempt of the courage, character, manners, or even language of particular places, you are doing a greater injury to the common cauſe, than you are aware of. If ſuch practices are admitted among us, I ſhall look upon it as one of the moſt dangerous ſymptoms, and if they become general, a preſage of approaching ruin.

By firmneſs and patience, I mean a reſolute adherence to your duty, and laying your account with many difficulties as well as occaſional diſappointments. In a former part of this diſcourſe, I have cautioned you againſt oſtentation and vain glory. Be pleaſed farther to obſerve that extremes often beget one another, the ſame perſons who exult extravagantly on ſucceſs, are generally moſt liable to deſpondent timidity on every little inconſiderable defeat. Men of this character are the bane and corruption of every ſociety or party to which they belong, but they are eſpecially the ruin of an army if ſuffered to continue in it. Remember the viciſſitude of human things, and the uſual courſe of providence. How often has a juſt cauſe been reduced to the loweſt ebb, and yet when firmly adhered to, has become finally triumphant. I ſpeak this now while the affairs of the colonies are in ſo proſperous a ſtate, leſt this proſperity itſelf ſhould render you leſs able to bear unexpected misfortunes—The ſum of the whole is, that the bleſſing of God is only to be looked for by thoſe who are not wanting in the diſcharge of their own duty. I would neither have you to truſt in an arm of fleſh, nor ſit with folded hands and expect that miracles ſhould be wrought in your defence.—This is a

ſin which is in Scripture ſtiled tempting God. In oppoſition to it, I would exhort you as Joab did the hoſt of Iſrael, who, though he does not appear to have had a ſpotleſs character throughout, certainly in this inſtance ſpoke like a prudent general and a pious man. 2 Sam. x. 12. "Be of good courage, and let us behave ourſelves valiantly "for our people and for the cities of our God, and let the "Lord do that which is good in his ſight."

I ſhall now conclude this diſcourſe by ſome exhortations to duty founded upon the truths, which have been illuſtrated above, and ſuited to the intereſting ſtate of this country at the preſent time; and,

1. Suffer me to recommend to you an attention to the public intereſt of religion, or in other words, zeal for the glory of God and the good of others. I have already endeavored to exhort ſinners to repentance, what I have here in view is to point out to you the concern which every good man ought to take in the national character and manners, and the means which he ought to uſe for promoting public virtue, and bearing down impiety and vice. This is a matter of the utmoſt moment, and which ought to be well underſtood, both in its nature and principles. Nothing is more certain than that a general profligacy and corruption of manners makes a people ripe for deſtruction. A good form of government may hold the rotten materials together for ſome time, but beyond a certain pitch even the beſt conſtitution will be ineffectual, and ſlavery muſt enſue. On the other hand, when the manners of a nation are pure, when true religion and internal principles maintain their vigor, the attempts of the moſt powerful enemies to oppreſs them are commonly baffled and diſappointed. This will be found equally certain, whether we conſider the great principles of God's moral government, or the operation and influence of natural cauſes.

What follows from this? That he is the beſt friend to American liberty, who is moſt ſincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion, and who ſets himſelf with the greateſt firmneſs to bear down profanity and immorality of every kind. Whoever is an avowed enemy

to God, I ſcruple not to call him an enemy to his country. Do not ſuppoſe, my brethren, that I mean to recommend a furious and angry zeal for the circumſtantials of religion, or the contentions of one ſect with another about their peculiar diſtinctions. I do not wiſh you to oppoſe any body's religion, but every body's wickedneſs. Perhaps there are few ſurer marks of the reality of religion, than when a man feels himſelf more joined in ſpirit to a truly holy perſon of a different denomination, than to an irregular liver of his own. It is therefore your duty in this important and critical ſeaſon to exert yourſelves every one in his proper ſphere to ſtem the tide of prevailing vice, to promote the knowledge of God, the reverence of his name and worſhip, and obedience to his laws.

Perhaps you will aſk, what it is that you are called to do for this purpoſe farther than your own perſonal duty? I anſwer this itſelf when taken in its proper extent is not a little. The nature and obligation of viſible religion is, I am afraid, little underſtood and leſs attended to.

Many from a real or pretended fear of the imputation of hypocriſy, baniſh from their converſation and carriage every appearance of reſpect and ſubmiſſion to the living God. What a weakneſs and meanneſs of ſpirit does it diſcover for a man to be aſhamed in the preſence of his fellow ſinners, to profeſs that reverence to almighty God which he inwardly feels: The truth is, he makes himſelf truly liable to the accuſation which he means to avoid. It is as genuine and perhaps a more culpable hypocriſy to appear to have leſs religion than you really have, than to appear to have more. This falſe ſhame is a more extenſive evil than is commonly apprehended. We contribute conſtantly, though inſenſibly, to form each others character and manners; and therefore, the uſefulneſs of a ſtrictly holy and conſcientious deportment is not confined to the poſſeſſor, but ſpreads its happy influence to all that are within its reach. I need ſcarcely add, that in proportion as men are diſtinguiſhed by underſtanding, literature, age, rank, office, wealth, or any other circumſtance, their example will be uſeful on the one hand, or pernicious on the other.

But I cannot content myſelf with barely recommending a ſilent example. There is a dignity in virtue which is entitled to authority, and ought to claim it. In many caſes it is the duty of a good man, by open reproof and oppoſition, to wage war with profaneneſs. There is a ſcripture precept delivered in very ſingular terms, to which I beg your attention; "Thou ſhalt not hate thy "brother in thy heart, but ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke him, "and not ſuffer ſin upon him." How prone are many to repreſent reproof as flowing from ill nature and ſurlineſs of temper: The Spirit of God, on the contrary, conſiders it as the effect of inward hatred, or want of genuine love, to forbear reproof when it is neceſſary or may be uſeful. I am ſenſible there may in ſome caſes be a reſtraint from prudence, agreeably to that caution of Solomon, "Caſt not your pearls before ſwine, "leſt they trample them under their feet, and turn again "and rent you." Of this every man muſt judge as well as he can for himſelf; but certainly, either by open reproof, or expreſſive ſilence, or ſpeedy departure from ſuch ſociety, we ought to guard againſt being partakers of other men's ſins.

To this let me add, that if all men are bound in ſome degree, certain claſſes of men are under peculiar obligations to the diſcharge of this duty. Magiſtrates, miniſters, parents, heads of families, and thoſe whom age has rendered venerable, are called to uſe their authority and influence for the glory of God and the good of others. Bad men themſelves diſcover an inward conviction of this, for they are often liberal in their reproaches of perſons of grave characters or religious profeſſion, if they bear with patience the profanity of others. Inſtead of enlarging on the duty of men in authority in general, I muſt particularly recommend this matter to thoſe who have the command of ſoldiers inliſted for the defence of their country. The cauſe is ſacred, and the champions for it ought to be holy. Nothing is more grieving to the heart of a good man, than to hear from thoſe who are going to the field, the horrid ſound of curſing and blaſphemy; it cools the

ardor of his prayers, as well as abates his confidence and hope in God. Many more circumſtances affect me in ſuch a caſe, than I can enlarge upon, or indeed eaſily enumerate at preſent; the glory of God, the intereſt of the deluded ſinner, going like a devoted victim and imprecating vengeance on his own head, as well as the cauſe itſelf committed to his care. We have ſometimes taken the liberty to forebode the downfal of the Britiſh empire, from the corruption and degeneracy of the people. Unhappily the Britiſh ſoldiers have been diſtinguiſhed among all the nations in Europe, for the moſt ſhocking profanity. Shall we then pretend to emulate them in this infernal diſtinction, or rob them of the horrid privilege? God forbid. Let the officers of the army in every degree remember, that as military ſubjection, while it laſts, is the moſt complete of any, it is in their power greatly to reſtrain, if not wholly to baniſh, this flagrant enormity.

2. I exhort all who are not called to go into the field to apply themſelves with the utmoſt diligence to works of induſtry. It is in your power by this means not only to ſupply the neceſſities, but to add to the ſtrength of your country. Habits of induſtry prevailing in a ſociety not only increaſe its wealth, as their immediate effect, but they prevent the introduction of many vices, and are intimately connected with ſobriety and good morals. Idleneſs is the mother or nurſe of almoſt every vice; and want, which is its inſeparable companion, urges men on to the moſt abandoned and deſtructive courſes. Induſtry, therefore is a moral duty of the greateſt moment, abſolutely neceſſary to national proſperity, and the ſure way of obtaining the bleſſing of God. I would alſo obſerve, that in this, as in every other part of God's government, obedience to his will is as much a natural mean, as a meritorious cauſe of the advantage we wiſh to reap from it. Induſtry brings up a firm and hardy race. He who is inured to the labor of the field, is prepared for the fatigues of a campaign. The active farmer who riſes with the dawn and follows his team or plow, muſt in the end be an overmatch for thoſe effeminate and delicate ſoldiers, who

are nurſed in the lap of ſelf-indulgence, and whoſe greateſt exertion is in the important preparation for, and tedious attendance on, a maſquerade, or midnight ball.

3. In the laſt place, ſuffer me to recommend to you frugality in your families, and every other article of expence. This the ſtate of things among us renders abſolutely neceſſary, and it ſtands in the moſt immediate connection both with virtuous induſtry, and active public ſpirit. Temperance in meals, moderation and decency in dreſs, furniture and equipage, have, I think, generally been characteriſtics of a diſtinguiſhed patriot. And when the ſame ſpirit pervades a people in general, they are fit for every duty, and able to encounter the moſt formidable enemy. The general ſubject of the preceding diſcourſe has been the wrath of man praiſing God. If the unjuſt oppreſſion of your enemies, which withholds from you many of the uſual articles of luxury and magnificence, ſhall contribute to make you clothe yourſelves and your children with the works of your own hands, and cover your tables with the ſalutary productions of your own ſoil, it will be a new illuſtration of the ſame truth, and a real happineſs to yourſelves and your country.

I could wiſh to have every good thing done from the pureſt principles and the nobleſt views. Conſider, therefore, that the Chriſtian character, particularly the ſelf-denial of the goſpel, ſhould extend to your whole deportment. In the early times of Chriſtianity, when adult converts were admitted to baptiſm, they were aſked among other queſtions, Do you renounce the world, its ſhews, its pomp, and its vanities? I do. The form of this is ſtill preſerved in the adminiſtration of baptiſm, where we renounce the devil, the world, and the fleſh. This certainly implies not only abſtaining from acts of groſs intemperance and exceſs, but a humility of carriage, a reſtraint and moderation in all your deſires. The ſame thing, as it is ſuitable to your Chriſtian profeſſion, is alſo neceſſary to make you truly independant in yourſelves, and to ſeed the ſource of liberality and charity to others, or to the public. The riotous and waſteful liver, whoſe craving appetites make him conſtantly needy, is and muſt be ſub-

ject to many maſters, according to the ſaying of Solomon, "The borrower is ſervant to the lender." But the frugal and moderate perſon, who guides his affairs with diſcretion, is able to aſſiſt in public counſels by a free and unbiaſſed judgment, to ſupply the wants of his poor brethren, and ſometimes, by his eſtate. and ſubſtance to give important aid to a ſinking country.

Upon the whole, I beſeech you to make a wiſe improvement of the preſent threatning aſpect of public affairs, and to remember that your duty to God, to your country, to your families, and to yourſelves, is the ſame. True religion is nothing elſe but an inward temper and outward conduct ſuited to your ſtate and circumſtances in providence at any time. And as peace with God and conformity to him, adds to the ſweetneſs of created comforts while we poſſeſs them, ſo in times of difficulty and trial, it is in the man of piety and inward principle that we may expect to find the uncorrupted patriot, the uſeful citizen, and the invincible ſoldier.—God grant that in America true religion and civil liberty may be inſeparable, and that the unjuſt attempts to deſtroy the one, may in the iſſue tend to the ſupport and eſtabliſhment of both.

ADDRESS

TO THE

NATIVES OF SCOTLAND RESIDING IN AMERICA.

Countrymen and Friends,

AS ſoon as I had conſented to the publication of the foregoing ſermon, I felt an irreſiſtible deſire to accompany it with a few words addreſſed to you in particular. I am certain I feel the attachment of country as far as it is a virtuous or laudable principle, perhaps it would be nearer the truth to ſay, as far as it is a natural and pardonable prejudice. He who is ſo pleaſed may attribute it to this laſt when I ſay, that I have never ſeen cauſe to be aſhamed of the place of my birth; that ſince the revival of arts and letters in Europe in the cloſe of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century, the natives of Scotland have not been inferior to thoſe of any other country, for genius, erudition, military proweſs, or any of thoſe accompliſhments which improve or embelliſh human nature. When to this it is added, that ſince my coming to America at an advanced period of life, the friendſhip of my countrymen has been as much above my expectation as deſert, I hope every reader will conſider what is now to be offered as the effect not only of unfeigned good will, but of the moſt ardent affection.

It has given me no little uneaſineſs to hear the word *Scotch* uſed as a term of reproach in the American controverſy, which could only be upon the ſuppoſition that ſtrangers of that country are more univerſally oppoſed to the liberties of America than thoſe who were born in South-

Britain, or in Ireland, I am ſenſible that this has been done in ſome news-papers and contemptible anonymous publications, in a manner that was neither warranted by truth, nor dictated by prudence. There are many natives of Scotland in this country, whoſe oppoſition to the unjuſt claims of Great Britain has been as early and uniform, founded upon as rational and liberal principles, and therefore likely to be as laſting, as that of any ſet of men whatever. As to Great Britain itſelf, time has now fully diſcovered that the real friends of America in any part of that kingdom were very few, and thoſe whoſe friendſhip was diſintereſted, and in no degree owing to their own political factions, ſtill fewer. The wiſe and valuable part of the nation were, and as yet are, in a great meaſure ignorant of the ſtate of things in this country; neither is it eaſy for the bulk of a people to ſhake off their prejudices, and open their eyes upon the great principles of univerſal liberty. It is therefore at leaſt very diſputable, whether there is any juſt ground for the diſtinction between Scots and Engliſh on this ſubject at all.

This diſpute, however, I do not mean to enter upon, becauſe it is of too little moment to find a place here, but ſuppoſing that, in ſome provinces eſpecially, the natives of Scotland have been too much inclined to ſupport the uſurpations of the parent ſtate, I will firſt endeavor to account for it, by aſſigning ſome of its probable cauſes; and then offer a few conſiderations which ſhould induce them to wipe off the aſperſion entirely, by a contrary conduct.

As to the firſt of theſe, I will mention what I ſuppoſe to have been the firſt and radical cauſe, and which gave birth to every other, of the diſaffection of ſome of the natives of Scotland to the juſt privileges of America. What I have in view was the friends of liberty in many places of America, taking the part of, and ſeeming to conſider themſelves as in a great meaſure engaged in the ſame cauſe with, that very diſtinguiſhed perſon, John Wilkes, Eſq. of London. This was done not only in many writings and news-paper diſſertations, but one or two colonies, in ſome of their moſt reſpectable meetings, manifeſted their

attachment to him, and ſeemed to conſider him as their patron and friend. No. 45, which was the moſt offenſive number of a worthleſs paper, was repeated and echoed, by the moſt ſilly and ridiculous alluſions to it, through every part of the country, and by many who could not tell what was ſignified by the term.

It will not be neceſſary to ſay much on the prudence of ſuch conduct, becauſe I ſuppoſe thoſe who expected Wilkes's mob would pull down the parliament-houſe, or that there would be inſurrections all over the kingdom in behalf of America, are by this time fully ſatisfied of their miſtake. It appears now in the cleareſt manner, that, till very lately, thoſe who ſeemed to take the part of America in the Britiſh parliament, never did it on American principles. They either did not underſtand, or were not willing to admit, the extent of our claim. Even the great Lord Chatham's bill for reconciliation would not have been accepted here, and did not materially differ from what the miniſtry would have conſented to. The truth is, the far greateſt part of the countenance given in Britain to the complaints of this country, was by thoſe who had no other intention in it than to uſe them as an engine of oppoſition to the miniſtry for the time being. It is true, ſome of them have now learned to reaſon very juſtly, and upon the moſt liberal principles; but their number is not great, and it was not the caſe with any one ſpeaker or writer, whoſe works I have had the opportunity of peruſing, till the very laſt ſtage of the quarrel.

What effect this Wilkiſm (if I may ſpeak ſo) of many Americans may be ſuppoſed to have had upon the minds of gentlemen from Scotland, it is not difficult to explain. That gentleman and his aſſociates thought proper to found the whole of their oppoſition to the then miniſtry, upon a contempt and hatred of the Scots nation; and by the moſt illiberal methods, and the moſt ſcandalous falſehoods, to ſtir up a national jealouſy between the northern and ſouthern parts of the iſland. There was not a vile term or hateful idea, which ancient vulgar animoſity had ever uſed, though long union had made them ſcarcely intelligible, which he did not rake up and attempt to bring into cre-

dit, by writing and converſation. The conſequence of this is well known. Wilkes and ſome others were burnt in effigy in Scotland, and it produced ſo general an attachment to the king and miniſtry, as has not yet ſpent its force. In theſe circumſtances is it to be wondered at, that many who left Scotland within the laſt fifteen years, when they heard Wilkes and thoſe who adhered to him, extolled and celebrated by the ſons of liberty, ſhould be apt to conſider it as an evidence of the ſame ſpirit, and that they were engaged in ſupport of the ſame cauſe. Perhaps we may go a little higher with this remark in tracing political appearances to their ſource. It is generally ſaid that the King himſelf has diſcovered a violent rancorous perſonal hatred againſt the Americans. If this be true, and I know nothing to the contrary, it may be eaſily accounted for upon the very ſame principles.

I am far from ſuppoſing that this was a good reaſon for any man's being cool to the American cauſe, which was as different from that of Wilkes, as light is from darkneſs. It was indeed doing great diſhonor to the noble ſtruggle, to ſuppoſe it to have any connection with who ſhould be in or out of court-favor at London; and therefore it was always my opinion, that thoſe who railed againſt the king and miniſtry only, did not carry the argument home, nor fully underſtand the nature of their own plea. In order to juſtify the American oppoſition, it is not neceſſary to ſhew that the perſons in power have invaded liberty in Britain; it is ſufficient to ſay that they, with the concurrence of the whole nation, have refuſed to ſuffer it to continue in the colonies.——This leads me to the ſecond part of my deſign, which was to lay before you the reaſons which, I think, ſhould induce every lover of juſtice and of mankind, not only to be a well-wiſher, but a firm and ſtedfaſt friend to America, in this important conteſt.

It has been often ſaid, that the preſent is likely to be an important æra to America. I think we may ſay much more; it is likely to be an important æra in the hiſtory of mankind. In the ancient migrations, a new country was generally ſettled by a ſmall unconnected, and often an ig-

norant band. The people and the ſoil were alike uncultivated, and therefore they proceeded to improvement by very ſlow degrees; nay, many of them fell back and degenerated into a ſtate vaſtly more ſavage than the people from whence they came. In America we ſee a rich and valuable ſoil and an extenſive country, taken poſſeſſion of by the power, the learning, and the wealth of Europe. For this reaſon it is now exhibiting to the world a ſcene which was never ſeen before. It has had a progreſs in improvement and population ſo rapid as no political calculators have been able to aſcertain. I look upon every thing that has been ſaid upon this ſubject to be mere conjecture, except in ſuch places as there has been an actual numeration. When men ſay that America doubles its number in fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years, they ſpeak by gueſs, and they ſay nothing. In ſome places that may be under or over the truth; but there are vaſt tracts of land that fill every year with inhabitants, and yet the old ſettled places ſtill continue to increaſe.

It is proper to obſerve that the Britiſh ſettlements have been improved in a proportion far beyond the ſettlements of other European nations. To what can this be aſcribed? Not to the climate; for they are of all climates: Not to the people; for they are a mixture of all nations. It muſt therefore be reſolved ſingly into the degree of Britiſh liberty which they brought from home, and which pervaded more or leſs their ſeveral conſtitutions. It has been repeated to us, I know not how often, by the mercenary ſhort-ſighted writers in favor of ſubmiſſion to, or reunion with, Great-Britain, that we have thriven very much in paſt times by our dependance on the mother country, and therefore we ſhould be loth to part. Theſe writers forget that the very complaint is, that ſhe will not ſuffer us to enjoy our ancient rights. Can any paſt experience ſhew that we ſhall thrive under new impoſitions? I ſhould be glad any ſuch reaſoners would attempt to prove that we have thriven by our dependance, and not by the degree of independence which we have hitherto enjoyed. If we have thriven by our dependance, I conceive it is a neceſſary conſequence that thoſe provinces muſt have

thriven moſt which have been moſt dependant. But the contrary is ſelf-evident. Thoſe which have hitherto enjoyed the freeſt form of government, though greatly inferior in ſoil and climate, have yet out-ſtripped the others in number of people and value of land, merely becauſe the laſt were more under the influence of appointments and authority from home.

When this is the undeniable ſtate of things, can any perſon of a liberal mind wiſh that theſe great and growing countries ſhould be brought back to a ſtate of ſubjection to a diſtant power? And can any man deny, that if they had yielded to the claims of the Britiſh parliament, they would have been no better than a parcel of tributary ſtates, ruled by lordly tyrants, and exhauſted by unfeeling penſioners, under the commiſſion of one too diſtant to hear the cry of oppreſſion, and ſurrounded by thoſe who had an intereſt in deceiving him. It ought therefore, in my opinion, to meet with the cordial approbation of every impartial perſon, as I am confident it will of poſterity, that they have united for common defence, and reſolved that they will be both free and independent, becauſe they cannot be the one without the other.

As this meaſure, long foreſeen, has now taken place, I ſhall beg leave to ſay a few things upon it; in which I mean to ſhow, 1. That it was neceſſary. 2. That it will be honorable and profitable. And, 3. That, in all probability, it will be no injury, but a real advantage, to the iſland of Great-Britain.

1. It had become abſolutely neceſſary. All reconciliation, but upon the footing of abſolute unconditional ſubmiſſion, had been poſitively refuſed by Great-Britain; unleſs, therefore, the colonies had reſolved to continue in a looſe and broken ſtate, with the name of a government which they had taken arms to oppoſe, the ſtep which they have now taken could not have been avoided. Beſides, things had proceeded ſo far, and ſuch meaſures had been taken on both ſides, that it had become impoſſible to lay down a ſcheme by which *they* ſhould be ſure of our dependance, and *we*, at the ſame time, ſecured in our liberties. While things continued in their ancient ſtate, there was

perhaps a power on the part of each, of which they were hardly conſcious, or were afraid and unwilling to exert. But after the encroachments had been made and reſiſted, to expect any thing elſe than a continual attempt to extend authority on the one hand, and to guard againſt it on the other, is to diſcover very little knowledge of human nature. In ſuch a ſituation, though every claim of America ſhould be yielded, ſhe would ſoon be either in a ſtate of continual confuſion, or abſolute ſubmiſſion. The king of England, living in his Engliſh dominions, would not, and indeed durſt not, aſſent to any act of an American legiſlature, that was, or was ſuppoſed to be hurtful to his Engliſh ſubjects. This is not founded on conjecture, but experience. There is not (at leaſt dean Swift affirms it) any dependance of Ireland upon England, except an act of the Iriſh parliament, that the king of England ſhall be king of Ireland. This laſt has a ſeparate independent legiſlature, and in every thing elſe but the above circumſtance ſeems to be perfectly free; yet if any man ſhould aſſert, that the one kingdom is not truly ſubject to the other, he would in my opinion know very little of the ſtate and hiſtory of either.

2. A ſtate of independency will be both honorable and profitable to this country. I paſs over many advantages in the way of commerce, as well as in other reſpects, that muſt neceſſarily accrue from it, that I may dwell a little on the great and leading benefit, which is the foundation of all the reſt. We ſhall have the opportunity of forming plans of government upon the moſt rational, juſt, and equal principles. I confeſs I have always looked upon this with a kind of enthuſiaſtic ſatisfaction. The caſe never happened before ſince the world began. All the governments we have read of in former ages were ſettled by caprice or accident, by the influence of prevailing parties, or particular perſons, or preſcribed by a conqueror. Important improvements indeed have been forced upon ſome conſtitutions by the ſpirit of daring men, ſupported by ſucceſsful inſurrections. But to ſee government in large and populous countries ſettled from its foundation, by deliberate counſel, and directed immediately to the public

good of the preſent and future generations, while the people are waiting for the deciſion with full confidence in the wiſdom and impartiality of thoſe to whom they have committed the important truſt, is certainly altogether new. We learn indeed from hiſtory, that ſmall tribes and feeble new ſettlements, did ſometimes employ one man of eminent wiſdom, to prepare a ſyſtem of laws for them. Even this was a wiſe meaſure, and attended with happy effects. But how vaſt the difference, when we have the experience of all paſt ages, the hiſtory of human ſociety, and the well known cauſes of proſperity and miſery in other governments, to aſſiſt us in the choice.

The proſpect of this happy circumſtance, and the poſſibility of loſing it, and ſuffering the ſeaſon to paſs over, has filled me with anxiety for ſome time. So far as we have hitherto proceeded, there has been great unanimity and public ſpirit. The inhabitants of every province, and perſons of all denominations, have vied with each other in zeal for the common intereſt. But was it not to be feared that ſome men would acquire over-bearing influence? that human weakneſs and human paſſions would diſcover themſelves, and prevent the finiſhing of what had been ſo happily begun. In the time of the civil wars in England, had they ſettled a regular form of government as ſoon as the parliament had obtained an evident ſuperiority, their liberties would never have been ſhaken, and the revolution would have been unneceſſary. But by delaying the thing too long, they were broken into parties, and bewildered in their views, and at laſt tamely ſubmitted without reſiſtance to that very tyranny againſt which they had fought with ſo much glory and ſucceſs. For this reaſon I think that every candid and liberal mind ought to rejoice in the meaſures lately taken through the States of America, and particularly the late declaration of independance, as it will not only give union and force to the meaſures of defence while they are neceſſary, but lay a foundation for the birth of millions, and the future improvement of a great part of the globe.

I have only further to obſerve, 3. That I am confident the Independence of America will, in the end, be to the

real advantage of the iſland of Great Britain. Were this even otherwiſe, it would be a weak argument againſt the claim of juſtice. Why ſhould the ſecurity or proſperity of this vaſt country be ſacrificed to the ſuppoſed intereſt of an inconſiderable ſpot? But I cannot believe that the miſery and ſubjection of any country on earth, is neceſſary to the happineſs of another. Blind partiality and ſelf intereſt may repreſent it in this light; but the opinion is deluſive, the ſuppoſition is falſe. The ſucceſs and increaſe of one nation is, or may be, a benefit to every other. It is ſeldom, indeed, that a people in general can receive and adopt theſe generous ſentiments, they are nevertheleſs perfectly juſt. It is induſtry only, and not poſſeſſions, that makes the ſtrength and wealth of a nation; and this is not hindered but encouraged, provoked, and rewarded by the induſtry of others.*

But to leave the general principle, or rather to apply it to the caſe of Great Britain and America: What profit has the former hitherto received from the latter? and what can it reaſonably expect for the future? Only its trade, and ſuch part of that trade as tends to encourage the induſtry and increaſe the number of the inhabitants of that iſland. It will be ſaid, they intend to raiſe a large, clear, net revenue upon us, by taxation. It has been ſhewn by many, that all the taxes which they could raiſe would only ſerve to feed the inſatiable deſire of wealth in placemen and penſioners, to increaſe the influence of the crown, and the corruption of the people. It was by the acquiſition of numerous provinces that Rome haſtened to its ruin. But even ſuppoſing it otherwiſe, and that without any bad conſequence among themſelves, they were to acquire a great addition to their yearly revenue, for every ſhilling they gained by taxes, they would loſe ten in the way of trade. For a trifling addition to the ſums of public money to be applied or waſted by miniſters of ſtate, they would loſe ten times the quantity diſtributed among uſeful manufacturers, the ſtrength and glory of a ſtate. I think this has been ſometimes compared to the difference

* See David Hume's Eſſay on the jealouſy of trade.

between draughts of ſpirituous liquors to intoxicate the head or weaken the ſtomach, and cool refreſhing food to give ſoundneſs, health and vigor to every member of the body.

The trade, then, of America, as ſoon as peace is ſettled, will be as open to them as ever. But it will be ſaid, they have now an excluſive trade, they will then but ſhare it with other nations. I anſwer, an excluſive trade is not eaſily preſerved, and when it is preſerved, the reſtriction is commonly more hurtful than uſeful. Trade is of a nice and delicate nature; it is founded upon intereſt. It will force its way wherever intereſt leads, and can hardly by any art be made to go in another direction. The Spaniards have an excluſive trade, as far as they pleaſe to confine it, to their own plantations. Do they reap much benefit from it? I believe not. Has it made their own people more induſtrious at home? Juſt the contrary. Does it, in the natural courſe of things, make a people leſs careful to work as well, and as cheap as others, to procure voluntary purchaſers, when they know they can ſend their goods to thoſe who are obliged to take them? Does it not both tempt and enable great merchants in the capital, to import from other nations what they can export to ſuch a forced market, to advantage? By this means a conſiderable profit may come into the coffers of a few particulars, while no eſſential ſervice is done to the people, and the ultimate profit is carried to that country where the goods are produced or fabricated. It has been repeatedly ſaid by political writers in England, that the balance of trade is againſt that country to every nation, excepting Portugal and their own plantations. I will not anſwer for the truth or univerſality of this aſſertion, but if it is true in any meaſure, I will venture to affirm upon the principles of general reaſon, that the cauſe which produces it, is no other than the excluſive trade they have hitherto enjoyed to the American ſettlements.

But the circumſtance which I apprehend will contribute moſt to the intereſt of Great Britain in American Independence is, its influence in peopling and enriching this great continent. It will certainly tend to make the

American States numerous, powerful, and opulent, to a degree not eaſily conceived.' The great and penetrating Monteſquieu, in his Spirit of Laws, has ſhewn in the cleareſt manner, that nothing contributes ſo much to the proſperity of a people, as the ſtate of ſociety among them, and the form of their government. A free government overcomes every obſtacle, makes a deſart a fruitful field, and fills a bleak and barren country with all the conveniencies of life. If ſo, what muſt be the operation of this powerful cauſe upon countries enjoying in the higheſt degree every advantage that can be derived from ſituation, climate, and ſoil? If the trade of America has hitherto been of ſo great benefit to England, how much more valuable may it be when theſe countries ſhall be ſtill more highly improved, if ſhe ſhall continue to enjoy it? This argument is liable to no objection but what may ariſe from the loſs of an excluſive trade, which I have already conſidered. It may be added, however, that there is not now nor ever has been, any averſion in the Americans to the people of Great Britain, ſo that they may be ſure of our trade if they treat us as well as others, and if otherwiſe, they do not deſerve it.

I might illuſtrate the argument by ſtating the probable conſequences of a contrary ſuppoſition. If Great Britain ſhould prevail, or overcome the American States, and eſtabliſh viceroys with abſolute authority in every province; all men of ſpirit and lovers of freedom would certainly withdraw themſelves to a corner, if ſuch could be found, out of the reach of tyranny and oppreſſion. The numbers of the people at any rate would ſenſibly decreaſe, their wealth would be ſpeedily exhauſted, and there would remain only a nominal authority over a deſolate country, in return for a vaſt expence laid out in the conqueſt, and in place of a great and profitable trade, by which both nations were made happy. One of the arguments, if they may be called ſo, made uſe of againſt this country, and on which an obligation to obedience has been founded, is taken from the expence they have been at in blood and treaſure for our protection in former wars. This argument has been often anſwered in the fulleſt manner, but if they ſhall

continue to urge it, how fearful to think of the obligations we ſhall be under, after this war is finiſhed? Then ſhall we owe them all the ſums which they ſhall have laid out in ſubduing us, and all that we have ſpent in attempting to prevent it; all the blood which they ſhall have ſhed in attacking us, and all that we ſhall have ſpilt in our own defence. There is unqueſtionably a loſs to Great Britain by the one ſide of the account as well as the other; and it tends to ſhow, in the cleareſt manner, the unſpeakable folly, as well as great injuſtice of the promoters of this war.

Thus I have ſtated to you, though very briefly, the principles on which I think the American cauſe ought to be pleaded, and on which it ought to be eſpouſed and ſupported, by every lover of juſtice and of mankind. But though the general plea in juſtice were leſs clear than it is, there is a light in which the conduct of the oppoſers of it has always appeared to me unreaſonable and ungenerous to the higheſt degree. That reſiſtance to Great Britain has been determined on, in the moſt reſolute manner, through all the colonies, by a vaſt majority, is not only certain, but undeniable. In the beginning of the controverſy, ſome writers, with an impudence hardly to be paralleled, called the fact in queſtion, attempted to deceive the people in this country, and effectually deceived the people of England, by making them believe that it was only a few factious and violent men that had engaged in the conteſt. It is not very long ſince a writer had the courage to aſſert, that "nine tenths of the people of Pennſylvania were againſt independence." The falſhood of ſuch miſrepreſentations is now manifeſt, and indeed was probably known from the beginning by thoſe who deſired to have them believed. Taking this for granted, then, for an inconſiderable minority, whether natives or ſtrangers, to ſet themſelves in oppoſition to the public councils is contrary to reaſon and juſtice, and even to the very firſt principles of the ſocial life.

If there is any principle that was never controverted upon the ſocial union, it is, that as a body, every ſociety muſt be determined by the plurality. There was a time when it was not only juſt and conſiſtent, but neceſſary,

that every one ſhould ſpeak his mind freely and fully of the neceſſity or expediency of reſiſting the authority of Great Britain. But that time is over long ago. The meaſures being reſolved upon, and the conflict begun, one who is barely neuter can ſcarce be forgiven; a ſecret plodding enemy muſt be conſidered as a traitor. Every perſon who continued among us after the deciſive reſolutions formed by all the colonies, ought to be conſidered as pledging his faith and honor to aſſiſt in the common cauſe. Let me try to illuſtrate it by a ſimilar caſe. Suppoſe that a ſhip at ſea ſprings a leak, which expoſes the whole company to the moſt imminent danger of periſhing. Suppoſe a counſel is called of all the perſons on board to determine what port they ſhall endeavor to gain. Then it is not only the right but the duty of every one to ſpeak his own judgment, and to preſs it upon others by every argument in his power. Suppoſe a great majority determines to puſh for a certain place, and to go to the pump by turns every quarter of an hour; but that two, or three, or one, if you pleaſe, is of opinion that they ſhould have gone another courſe, becauſe of the wind, current, or any other circumſtance, and that it would be beſt to change hands at the pump only every half hour. All this is well. But if after the determination, this ſame gentleman, becauſe his advice was not followed, ſhould refuſe to pump at all, ſhould ſlily alter the ſhip's courſe, or deaden her way by every means in his power, or even ſhould only by continual complaints and deſpondent fears, diſcourage others, on whoſe activity the common ſafety depended, I deſire to know what treatment he would receive or deſerve? Without doubt he would be thrown over board in leſs time than I have taken to ſtate the caſe. I am not able to perceive the leaſt difference between this ſuppoſition and what takes place in America at the preſent time.

If this argument is juſt with reſpect to every inhabitant of the country, it ought to have ſome additional weight with thoſe who are not natives, and whoſe reſidence is not certain or has not been long. There is a great degree of indecency in ſuch taking any part againſt what the majority of the inhabitants think to be their intereſt and that

of their country. Were they even wrong, their miſtake ſhould be lamented, not reſiſted; on the contrary, it would be the part both of generoſity and juſtice to ſupport them effectually in a conteſt which wiſdom would have declined. We ſee indeed, every day, melancholy inſtances of a baſe and ſelfiſh temper operating different ways. Many when they do not obtain that rank and honor which their pride and partiality think their due, or if their advice is not followed, immediately renounce the ſervice of their country, and it may go to deſtruction for them. In oppoſition to this, let me recommend the example of the illuſtrious Fabius of Rome. He had given ſtrict orders to all his officers not to engage the enemy, but to keep at a diſtance. Unluckily his lieutenant-general, by his own raſhneſs, got entangled with a part of the army under his command, and was engaged. Fabius, preferring his country's good to fame, rivalſhip, and ſafety, came immediately to his ſupport with all expedition, and thereby gained a glorious and complete victory.

I hope you will take in good part the above reflections, which I think contain nothing that is virulent or indecent againſt any man or body of men. They are the effects of judgment and conviction. The author, as is probably known to many of you, has been perſonally abuſed in news-papers at home, for the part he was ſuppoſed to have taken in the American cauſe, which was in ſome degree indeed the motive to this addreſs. He hopes that an honeſt and faithful ſupport of liberty and equal government in this part of the world, will be no juſt reproach to his character, either as a ſcholar, a miniſter, or a Chriſtian; and that it is perfectly conſiſtent with an undiminiſhed regard for the country which gave him birth.

The above is ſubmitted to your candid peruſal, by,

Gentlemen,

Your ſincere friend, and

Obedient humble ſervant,

The AUTHOR.

DELIVERED AT A PUBLIC THANKSGIVING AFTER PEACE.

A

SERMON.

PSALM iii. 8.

Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.

MY BRETHREN,

WE are met together in obedience to public authority, to keep a day of ſolemn thankſgiving to God, for the goodneſs of his providence to the United States of America, in the courſe of a war which has now laſted ſeven years, with a powerful and formidable nation. We are particularly called upon to give thanks for the ſignal ſucceſſes with which it hath pleaſed him to bleſs our arms and thoſe of our allies, in the courſe of the laſt year, and the campaign which is now drawing to a cloſe. I need ſay nothing of the importance of the great conteſt in which we have been ſo long engaged, or the intereſting alternative which depends upon the iſſue, as theſe ſeem to have been felt in the fulleſt manner by all ranks in this country from the beginning. The language even of the common people will convince every man of reflexion that they are univerſally ſenſible how much is at ſtake. My proper buſineſs therefore is to engage every pious hearer to adore the providence of God in general, to offer with ſincerity

and gratitude the sacrifice of praise for his many mercies, and to make a wise and just improvement of the present promising situation of public affairs.

Many who now hear me are witnesses that it has never been my practice, for reasons which appear to me to be good, to intermix politics with the ordinary service of the sanctuary, on the weekly returns of the christian sabbath, further than fervent supplications to the Throne of Grace for divine direction to the public counsels, and assistance to those who are employed in the public service. But on days of this kind it becomes part of a minister's duty to direct the attention of the hearers to events of a public nature. This you know I did with great concern and at considerable length six years ago on a public Fast Day. I would therefore willingly in this more advanced period, take a view of what is past, and endeavor to direct you in what remains of your duty to God, to your country, and to yourselves.

For this purpose I have chosen the words of the Psalmist David, now read which are part of a psalm generally thought to have been composed by the royal author before the war with Absalom his unnatural son, was wholly finished, but when he had such presages of success as made him speak the language of faith and confidence. "I laid "me down and slept: I awaked for the Lord sustained "me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that "have set themselves against me round about. Arise O "Lord, save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine "enemies upon the cheek-bone: thou hast broken the teeth "of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; "thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah."

In discoursing upon this subject, I propose, through the assistance of divine grace,

1. To explain and state the proper meaning of this expression or sentiment of the inspired psalmist, "salvation "belongeth unto the Lord."

II. To lay before you a succinct view of what the United States of America owe to divine providence in the course of the present war.

III. To make a practical improvement of the subject for your instruction and direction.

First then, I am to explain and state the proper meaning of this expression or sentiment of the inspired psalmist, "salvation belongeth unto the Lord." This I mean to do by adhering strictly to what appears to be the mind of the spirit of God, in the passage before us, as well as in a manner agreeable to the analogy of faith. As religion is the same in substance in every age, the reflexions of pious persons in the course of providence arise from the same examples and lead to the same end. The words may justly be supposed to contain the psalmist's thankful acknowledgment of the past mercies of God, as well as the foundation of his future security. They carry in them a general confession of the influence of divine providence upon every event, and in particular with respect to *salvation*, or deliverance from impending danger. In this view when he says "salvation belongeth unto the Lord." It seems to imply the three following things,

1. That "salvation belongeth unto the Lord," as distinguished from human or created help, and therefore all confidence in man stands opposed to the sentiment expressed by the holy psalmist in the text. It is not opposed to the use or application of, but to an excessive or undue reliance on human means, or second causes of any kind. It implies, that success in any attempt is to be ultimately attributed to God. That it is he who by his providence provides outward means, who raises up friends to his people, or causes *their enemies to be at peace with them*. That it is he who in cases of difficulty and danger, directs their hands to war and their fingers to fight, and finally crowns their endeavors with success. Whether therefore the outward advantages are great or small, whether the expectation, or the probability of success has been strong or weak, he who confesses that salvation belongeth unto God, will finally give the glory to him. Confidence before, and boasting after the event, are alike contrary to this disposition. If any person desires to have his faith in this truth, confirmed or improved, let him read the history of mankind, in a cool and considerate manner, and with a

ſerious frame of ſpirit. He will then perceive that every page will add to his conviction. He will find that the moſt important events have ſeemed to turn upon circumſtances the moſt trivial and the moſt out of the reach of human direction. A blaſt of wind, a ſhower of rain, a random ſhot, a private quarrel, the neglect of a ſervant, a motion without intention, or a word ſpoken by accident and miſunderſtood, has been the cauſe of a victory or defeat which has decided the fate of empires. Whoever with theſe facts in his view, believes the conſtant influence and over-ruling power of divine Providence, will know what the Pſalmiſt means when he ſays, "Salvation be-"longeth unto the Lord."

2. In this ſentiment, the Pſalmiſt ſeems to have had in view the *omnipotence* of Providence; that nothing is impoſſible with God; that there is no ſtate ſo dangerous, no enemy ſo formidable, but he is able to work deliverance. He has not only the direction and government of means and ſecond cauſes, but is himſelf ſuperior to all means. The word *ſalvation*, when it is applied in ſcripture to temporal danger, generally ſignifies a great and diſtinguiſhed deliverance. Thus it is uſed by Moſes, Exodus xiv. 13. "Stand ſtill and ſee the ſalvation of God;" and in the ſame manner, 1 Sam. xiv. 45. "Shall Jonathan "die, who hath wrought this great ſalvation in Iſrael?" When, therefore, a perſon or people are threatened with evils of the moſt dreadful kind: when they are engaged in a conflict very unequal; when they are driven to extremity, and have no reſource left as means of defence: then, if the cauſe in which they are engaged is righteous and juſt, they may cry to God for relief. The ſentiment expreſſed by the Pſalmiſt ought to bear them up againſt deſpair; and they may ſay as the angel to the father of the faithful, "Is there any thing too hard for the Lord?" There are many inſtances in ſcripture of ſignal deliverance granted to the ſervants of God, ſome of them even wholly miraculous, which teach us to ſet our hope in his mercy, and not to ſuffer his mighty works to ſlip out of our minds. This is the exerciſe of faith in an unchangeable God—"the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and forever."

3. This ſentiment has reſpect to the mercy and goodneſs of God, or his readineſs to hear the cry of the oppreſſed, and ſend deliverance to his people. This circumſtance is neceſſary to be taken in, to make him the proper object of faith and truſt; and it muſt be combined with the other, to give us a complete view of the influence of Providence. Power and wiſdom alone, give an imperfect diſplay of the divine character. It would give little ſupport under the preſſure of affliction, to have a general or theoretical perſuaſion, that all things are poſſible with God: but if we believe his readineſs to interpoſe, and ſee our title clear to implore his help, we have that hope which is juſtly called, "the anchor of the ſoul, ſure and ſtedfaſt." In this ſenſe, ſalvation belongeth unto God; it is his prerogative; it is his glory. The promiſe ſo often repeated in the ſame or ſimilar terms, is addreſſed both to nations and particular perſons. "He ſhall call upon me, and I "will anſwer him. I will be with him in trouble, to deli-"ver him, and to honor him. The righteous cry, and "the Lord heareth and delivereth him out of all his trou-"bles. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the "Lord delivereth him out of them all."

Having briefly ſtated theſe known and general truths, I proceed to the ſecond and principal thing propoſed, which was to lay before you a ſuccinct view of what the United States of America owe to divine Providence, in the courſe of the preſent war. On conſidering this part of the ſubject, a difficulty preſents itſelf as to the manner of handling it. I am deſirous of doing it ſome meaſure of juſtice, and at the ſame time of avoiding exceſſive prolixity, or a tedious enumeration of particular facts. To unite theſe two purpoſes as much as poſſible, I will divide what I have to ſay into diſtinct branches; and after a few words of illuſtration on each of them, leave it to every hearer to add ſuch further examples as may have fallen within his own obſervation. The branches I would ſeparately conſider, are the following: 1. Signal ſucceſſes or particular and providential favors to us in the courſe of the war. 2. Preſervation from difficulties and evils which ſeemed to be in our

ſituation unavoidable, and at the ſame time next to inſurmountable. 3. Confounding the councils of our enemies, and making them haſten on the change which they deſired to prevent.

1. Signal ſucceſſes or providential favors to us in the courſe of the war. Here I muſt mention what happened at the beginning of the conteſt, and prevented us from being cruſhed in the very out-ſet, although it is now in a manner wholly forgotten. Let us remember our true ſituation, after we had made the moſt public and peremptory declarations of our determination to defend our liberties. There was a willing ſpirit, but unarmed hands. Our enemies have all along charged us with a deliberate concerted purpoſe of breaking with them, and ſetting up an independent empire. The falſhood of this accuſation might be made to appear from many circumſtances; as there being no pre-contract among the ſtates themſelves, nor any attempt to engage allies or aſſiſtance in Europe, and ſeveral others. But though there were no other argument at all, it is ſufficiently proved by the total want of arms and ammunition to ſupply us even during the firſt ſtages of reſiſtance. The nakedneſs of the country in this reſpect is well known; and our enemies endeavored to avail themſelves of it by taking every meaſure to prevent their being brought to us. This difficulty was got over by many providential ſupplies, without the care or foreſight of thoſe who were at the head of affairs, and particularly by many unexpected captures from our enemies themſelves.

How contrary to human appearance and human conjectures have many circumſtances turned out? It was univerſally ſuppoſed at firſt that we ſhould be able to do nothing at all at ſea, becauſe of the great naval power of the enemy; yet the ſucceſs of our private veſſels has been one of the moſt powerful means of diſtreſſing them, and ſupporting us. I cannot help in particular taking notice, that the eaſtern ſtates which were the firſt objects of their vengeance, were actually in their poſſeſſion, and ſeemed to be devoted to pillage and deſtruction; yet in a ſhort time they were delivered, and have in the courſe of the war

acquired a greater acceſſion of wealth and power than it is probable they could have done in the ſame period of ſecurity and peace.

It falls to be taken notice of under this branch of the ſubject, that our moſt ſignal ſucceſſes have generally been when we had the weakeſt hopes or the greateſt fears. What could be more diſcouraging than our ſituation at the cloſe of the year 1776? when, after general Howe's arrival with ſo powerful and well appointed an armament, our army enliſted but for a few months, was almoſt entirely diſperſed? Yet then did the ſurpriſe of the Heſſians at Trenton, and the ſubſequent victory at Princeton, raiſe the drooping ſpirits of the country, and give a new turn to our affairs. Theſe advantages redounded greatly to the honor of the commander in chief who planned, and the handful of troops with him, who executed the meaſures, as is confeſſed by all; yet were they of ſtill greater moment to the cauſe of America in general, than they were brilliant as military exploits. This place and neighborhood having been the ſcene of theſe actions, cannot but make them and their conſequences freſh in the memory of every one who now hears me.

The great victory over general Burgoyne and his army, (weakened at Bennington, and taken priſoners at Saratoga,) which opened the eyes of Europe in general, and in ſome degree even of Britain, happened at a time when many were diſcouraged. It happened when after the loſſes of Brandy Wine and Germantown, the Britiſh were in poſſeſſion of Philadelphia, and the Congreſs of the United States were obliged to fly to a diſtant part of the country. It happened not long after our diſgraceful flight from Ticonderoga, and the ſcandalous loſs of that poſt, which was every where ſaid and thought to be the key of the continent, and the poſſeſſion of it eſſential to our ſecurity. We muſt not omit to obſerve that this victory over a numerous army of Britiſh regulars, was obtained by an army compoſed in a great meaſure of militia ſuddenly collected, and freemen of the country who turned out as volunteers.

In the ſame manner our late aſtoniſhing ſucceſs in the ſouth began when our affairs in that part of the continent wore a moſt diſcouraging aſpect. The year 1781 which began with mutiny in the northern army, and weakneſs in the ſouthern, produced more inſtances of gallantry and military proweſs than all the former, and was cloſed with a victory more glorious to us, and more humiliating to the enemy, than any thing that had before happened during the courſe of the war.

It was ſurely a great favor of Providence to raiſe up for us ſo great and illuſtrious an ally in Europe. This Prince has aſſiſted us as you all know in a very powerful and effectual manner, and has granted that aſſiſtance upon a footing ſo generous as well as juſt, that our enemies will not yet believe, but there muſt be ſome ſecret and partial ſtipulations in favor of himſelf and his ſubjects, although no ſuch thing exiſts.

Let me add to all theſe the providing for us a perſon who was ſo eminently qualified for the arduous taſk of commander in chief of the armies of the United States. I muſt make ſome apology here. None who know me, I think will charge me with a diſpoſition to adulation or groſs flattery of living characters. I am of opinion and have often expreſſed it, that the time for fixing a man's character is after death has ſet his ſeal upon it, and favor fear and friendſhip are at end. For this reaſon I do not mean to give a general or full character of the perſon here in view. But in ſpeaking of the kindneſs of Providence to the United States, it would be a culpable neglect not to mention that ſeveral of his characteriſtic qualities ſeem ſo perfectly ſuited to our wants, that we muſt conſider his appointment to the ſervice, and the continued health with which he has been bleſſed, as a favor from the God of heaven. Conſider his coolneſs and prudence, his fortitude and perſeverance, his happy talent of engaging the affection of all ranks, ſo that he is equally acceptable to the citizen, and to the ſoldier —to the ſtate in which he was born, and to every other on the continent. To be a brave man, or ſkilful commander, is common to him with many others; but this

country ſtood in need of a comprehenſive and penetrating mind, which underſtood the effect of particular meaſures in bringing the general cauſe to an iſſue. When we contraſt his character and conduct with thoſe of the various leaders that have been oppoſed to him, when we conſider their attempts to blaſt each others reputation, and the ſhort duration of their command, we muſt ſay that Providence has fitted him for the charge, and called him to the ſervice.

This head can hardly be better cloſed than with the extraordinary interpoſition of divine Providence for the diſcovery of the black treachery of Arnold, who intended to put one of the moſt important fortreſſes, and the general himſelf into the enemies hands. This deſign was ripe for execution, and the time of execution was at hand. As there was no ſuſpicion of the traitor, no meaſures were, or could be taken for preventing it. The meeting of the ſpy with two friends of America, which was entirely caſual, the unaccountable embaraſſment of that artful perſon, when with a little addreſs, he might eaſily have extricated himſelf; and indeed, the whole circumſtances of that affair, clearly point out the finger of God.

I might have added many more inſtances of the favor of providence in particular events, but what have been mentioned, I think are fully ſufficient for the purpoſe, for which they are adduced, and will lead the hearers to the recollection of others of a ſimilar kind.

The ſecond part of my obſervations, muſt be on the difficulties and dangers, which ſeemed to be in our ſituation, unavoidable, and, at the ſame time, next to inſurmountable. The firſt of this kind, which I ſhall mention, is diſſention, or the oppoſition of one colony to another. On this our enemies reckoned very much, from the beginning. Even before the war broke out, reaſoners ſeemed to build their hopes, of the colonies not breaking off from the mother country, for ages, upon the impoſſibility of their uniting their ſtrength, and forming one compact body, either for offence or reſiſtance. To ſay the truth, the danger was great and real. It was on this account,

foreſeen and dreaded, and all true patriots were anxious to guard againſt it. Great thanks, doubtleſs, are due to many citizens in every ſtate, for their virtuous efforts to promote the general union. Theſe efforts have not been without effect; but I am of opinion, that union has been hitherto preſerved and promoted, to a degree that no man ventured to predict, and very few had the courage to hope for. I confeſs myſelf, from the beginning, to have apprehended more danger, from this, than from any other quarter, and muſt now declare, that my fears have been wholly diſappointed, and my hopes have been greatly exceeded. In the public councils, no mark of diſſention, in matters of importance, has ever appeared; and I take upon me further to ſay, that every year has obliterated colonial diſtinctions, and worn away local prejudices, ſo that mutual affection, is at preſent more cordial, and the views and works of the whole, more uniform, than ever they were, at any preceding period.

Having mentioned the union and harmony of the United States, it will be very proper to add, that the harmony, that has prevailed in the allied army, is another ſignal mercy, for which we ought to be thankful to God. It is exceedingly common, for diſſention to take place, between troops of different nations, when acting together. In the Engliſh hiſtory, we meet with few examples of conjunct expeditions, with ſea and land forces, in which the harmony has been complete. Our enemies did not fail to make uſe of every topic, which they apprehended, would be inflammatory and popular, to produce jealouſies between us and our allies. Yet it has been wholly in vain. Not only, have the officers and ſoldiers of the American and French armies, acted together, with perfect cordiality, but the troops of our allies, have met with a hearty welcome, wherever they have been, from the people of the country; and indeed, juſt ſuch a reception as ſhows they were eſteemed to be of the utmoſt importance and utility to the American cauſe.

Another difficulty we had to encounter, was the want of money and reſources for carrying on the war. To remedy this evil an expedient was fallen upon which I do

not look upon myself as obliged either to juſtify or approve. It was, however embraced by the plurality as neceſſary, and upon the whole, leſs hazardous than any other, which in our ſituation was practicable. The difficulty of raiſing, clothing, paying and ſupporting an army with a depreciated currency, which its own nature, the arts of intereſted perſons, and the unwearied attempts of our enemies were puſhing on to annihilation, may be eaſily perceived. Yet the war has not only been ſupported, but we have ſeen the fall and ruin of the money itſelf without the leaſt injury, to the public cauſe. Without injury did I ſay, it was to the unſpeakable benefit of the public cauſe. Many private perſons indeed, have ſuffered ſuch injury as not only merits pity, but calls for redreſs, and I hope the time will come, when all the redreſs ſhall be given that the nature of the thing and the ſtate of the country, will admit. In the mean time, when we reflect upon what is paſt, we have a proof of the general attachment of the country to the cauſe of liberty, the ſtrongeſt perhaps that can well be conceived, and we ſee a circumſtance from which we feared the greateſt evil, adding its force to many others in blinding our enemies, miſleading their meaſures, and diſappointing their expectations.

Another difficulty we had before us was the being obliged to encounter the whole force of the Britiſh nation, with an army compoſed of raw ſoldiers, unacquainted with military diſcipline. The difficulty was increaſed by our own conduct, viz. filling our army with ſoldiers enliſted for ſhort periods. The views of thoſe who preferred this method was certainly very honorable, though the wiſdom of it is at leaſt very diſputable. They hoped it would make every man in America a ſoldier in a ſhort time. This effect indeed, it has in a good degree produced by the frequent calls of the militia, wherever the enemy appeared. They alſo apprehended danger from a ſtanding army, unconnected with civil life, who after they had conquered their enemies might give cauſe of jealouſy to their friends. The hiſtory of other countries in general, and in particular that of the civil wars in England againſt Charles the firſt, ſeemed to give plauſa-

bility to this reaſon, though from ſeveral circumſtances there was leſs cauſe of fear in America, than would have been in one of the European ſtates. However the meaſure was reſolved upon by the plurality at firſt, and we felt the inconvenience of it very ſeverely; but is pleaſed God to preſerve us from utter deſtruction, to ſet bounds to the progreſs of our enemies, and to give time to the ſtates to make better and more effectual proviſion for their final overthrow.

The only other danger I ſhall mention, was that of anarchy and confuſion, when government under the old formwas at an end, and every ſtate was obliged to eſtabliſh civil conſtitutions for preſerving internal order, at the very ſame time that they had to reſiſt the efforts of a powerful enemy from without. This danger appeared ſo conſiderable that ſome of the king of Great Britian's governors ran off early, as they themſelves profeſſed, in order to augment it. They hoped that univerſal diſorder, would prevail in every colony, and not only defeat the meaſures of the friends of liberty, but be ſo inſupportable to the people in general, as to oblige them to return to their ſubjection, for their own ſakes, and to be rid of a ſtill greater evil. This danger through the divine bleſſing, we happily and indeed entirely eſcaped. The governors by their flight ripened every meaſure, and haſtened on the change, by rendering it viſibly neceſſary. Provincial conventions were held, city and county committees, were every where choſen, and ſuch was the zeal for liberty, that the judgments of theſe committees was as perfectly ſubmitted to, and their orders more cheerfully, and completely executed, than thoſe of any regular magiſtrates, either under the old government, or ſince the change. At the ſame time, every ſtate prepared and ſettled their civil conſtitutions which have now all taken place, and except in very few inſtances without the leaſt diſcord or diſſatisfaction. Happily for us in this ſtate, our conſtitution has now ſubſiſted near ſeven years, and we have not ſo much as heard the voice of diſcontent. I ſpeak on this head, of what is known to every hearer, and indeed to the whole world; and yet I am perſuaded that to thoſe who reflect upon it,

it will appear next to miraculous. Although ſo much was to be done, in which every man was intereſted, although the colonies were ſo various and extenſive, and the parliament of Great Britain was threatening, and its army executing vengeance againſt us, yet the whole was completed in little more than a year, with as much quietneſs and compoſure, as a private perſon would move his family and furniture from one houſe, and ſettle them in another.

The third branch of my obſervations ſhall conſiſt of a few inſtances, in which the councils of our enemies have been confounded, and their meaſures have been ſuch as to haſten on the change, which they deſired to prevent. As to the firſt of theſe, nothing can be more remarkable, than the ignorance and error in which they have continued from the firſt riſe of the controverſy, to the preſent time, as to the ſtate of things, and the diſpoſitions of men in America. Even thoſe at the head of affairs in Great Britain, have not only conſtantly given out, but in my opinion, have ſincerely believed, that the great body of the people were upon their ſide, and were only miſled into rebellion, by a few factious leaders. At the ſame time, the very ſame perſons, without being ſenſible of the abſurdity, have affirmed, that this country was groaning under the oppreſſion of its rulers, and longed to be delivered from it. Now theſe things could not both be true. If the firſt had been true, theſe leaders muſt have been popular and acceptable in a high degree, and have had the moſt extenſive influence. If the laſt had been true, they muſt have been inwardly and univerſally deteſted. But how many circumſtances might have convinced them of the falſehood of both theſe aſſertions. The vaſt extent of the ſtates, and the concurrence of all ranks and claſſes of men, which was ſo early, ſo uniform and ſo notorious, plainly prove, that no ſuch thing could have happened, without a ſtrong and rooted inclination in the people themſelves, and ſuch as no addreſs or management of intereſted perſons could have produced. Beſides, thoſe who know how fluctuating a body the Congreſs is, and what continual changes take place in it, as to men, muſt perceive the ab-

ſurdity of their making or ſucceeding in any ſuch attempt. The truth is, the American Congreſs owes its exiſtence and its influence, to the people at large. I might eaſily ſhow, that there has hardly any great or important ſtep been taken, but the public opinion has gone before the reſolutions of that body; and I wiſh I could not ſay, that they have been ſometimes very ſlow, in hearing and obeying it.

As to the other aſſertion, it was ſtill more manifeſtly falſe, and they had greater opportunities of perceiving it to be ſo. If Congreſs, or thoſe in public truſt, in any ſtate, had tyrannized over the people, or wantonly oppreſſed them, the uſurpation would, in the nature of things, have come to a ſpeedy period. But what if I ſhould ſay, that this pretence of our enemies, in an equivocal ſenſe, is indeed true; and yet this truth, doth but the more clearly demonſtrate their error and deluſion. It is true, that Congreſs has, in many inſtances, been obliged to have recourſe to meaſures, in themſelves hard and oppreſſive, and confeſſed to be ſo; which yet, have been patiently ſubmitted to, becauſe of the important purpoſe that was to be ſerved by them. Of this kind, was the emiſſion of paper money; the paſſing of tender laws; compelling all into the militia; draughting the militia, to fill the regular army; preſſing proviſions and carriages; and many others of the like nature. Two things are remarkable in this whole matter: one, that every impoſition, for the public ſervice, fell heavieſt upon thoſe who were the friends of America; the lukewarm or contrary minded, always finding ſome way, of ſhifting the load from their own ſhoulders: The other, that from the freedom of the preſs in this country, there never were wanting, the boldeſt and moſt inflammatory publications, both againſt men and meaſures. Yet neither the one nor the other, nor both united, had any perceptible influence in weakening the attachment of the people. If this account is juſt, and I am confident it is known to be ſo, by almoſt all who now hear me, what leſs than judicial blindneſs, could have made our enemies ſo obſtinate, in the contrary ſentiments? Such however we know has been the caſe,

and as the whole of their proceedings have been grounded on miſtakes, it is no wonder that they have been both injudicious and unſucceſsful.

This matter may be explained in the following manner. They ſuppoſed that they had only a few diſcontented particulars to apprehend and puniſh, and an army to conquer in no reſpects comparable to their own; but in addition to this they had the loſt affections of a whole people to recover. The firſt which was almoſt of no conſequence at all, they bent their whole force to effect in council and in the field. The other they ſuppoſed was already done, or not worth the doing; and therefore every meaſure they took had a quite different intention, and a quite oppoſite effect. In all this they were fortified and confirmed by the ſentiments, diſcourſe and conduct of the diſaffected in America. Theſe unhappy people, from the joint influence of prejudice, reſentment and intereſt, were unwearied in their endeavors to miſlead their friends. Their prejudice deſerves to be mentioned firſt. This was great indeed. They had generally ſuch an exalted idea of the power of Britain, that they really conſidered it as madneſs to reſiſt. I could mention many ſentiments uttered by them which could hardly fail of making the hearers to ſmile at their groſs ignorance, and more than childiſh timidity. Reſentment alſo joined its force. They were ſometimes roughly handled by the multitude at the beginning of the controverſy. This led them to wiſh for revenge, and as they could not inflict it themſelves, to call for it from their friends in England. To theſe two circumſtances we may add that the road to favor was plainly that of flattery; and therefore their opinions and intelligence were generally ſuch as they ſuppoſed would be moſt acceptable to thoſe who had it in their power to provide for them, or promote them. Such was the effect of theſe circumſtances united, that time will conſtrain every body to confeſs, that the partizans and friends of the Engliſh in America, have done more eſſential injury to their cauſe, than the greateſt and boldeſt of their enemies.

The above diſtinction between overcoming the armed force of the ſtates, and regaining the people's hearts, is

the true key to explain the proceedings, and account for the events of the war. Every meaſure taken by Great-Britain, from the beginning, inſtead of having the leaſt tendency to gain the affections of the people of this country, had, and one would think muſt have been ſeen to have, the moſt powerful influence in producing the contrary effect. Without mentioning every ſeparate particular, I will only conſider a little the cruelty and ſeverity with which the war has been carried on; becauſe I am firmly of opinion, that the ſpirit and temper of our enemies in this conteſt, has been the principal cauſe of the diſappointment of their attempts. In this the cabinet and counſellors in Great-Britain, and the officers and ſoldiers of their armies in America, have nothing to reproach each other with. If the barbarity of the army has ever equalled, certainly it has never exceeded the cruelty of ſeveral of the acts of parliament. I will not enumerate theſe acts, which are ſo well known, and which ſome years ago were ſo often mentioned in every publication; but ſhall only tell you with what view I deſire you to recollect them. Every one of theſe acts, on their being known in America, ſerved to increaſe the union of the ſtates, to fill the heart of the citizens with reſentment, and to add vigor to the ſoldier's arm.

After the example of their employers at home, the commanders of the Britiſh armies, their officers and ſoldiers, and indeed all their adherents, ſeemed to have been animated with a ſpirit of implacable rancor, mingled with contempt towards the Americans. This is to be underſtood of the general run or greateſt number of every claſs, always admitting that there were particular exceptions, whoſe honor and principle controuled or overcame the national prejudice. Neither perhaps is it in any of them to be aſcribed ſo much to the national character, as to the nature and ſubject of the quarrel. It has been long obſerved, that civil wars are carried on with much greater fury, and attended with acts of greater barbarity, than wars between independent nations. The fact, however, of their barbarity is certain; and no leſs ſo, is the powerful

influence which this conduct has had in defeating their expectations either of reconciliation or submiſſion.

The barbarous treatment of the American priſoners through the whole war, but eſpecially at the beginning, when their enemies were confident of ſucceſs, is a melancholy ſubject indeed, and will be a ſtain upon the Britiſh name to future ages. No part of America can be ignorant of this, having witneſſes in every ſtate, in the few that returned alive out of their hands. But we in this ſtate, through which they paſſed to their homes, can never forget the appearance of the emaciated ſpectres who eſcaped or were exchanged from Britiſh dungeons or priſonſhips. Neither was it poſſible for the people in general not to be ſtruck with the contraſt when exchanges took place, and they ſaw companies of Britiſh priſoners going home hale and hearty, bearing every mark of their having been ſupplied with comfortable proviſions, and treated with humanity in every other reſpect. I am not to enlarge upon theſe known and fertile ſubjects. The only reaſon of their being introduced is to ſhew the effect which ſpectacles of this kind muſt have had upon the public mind, and their influence in rendering the return of the people of this country to ſubmiſſion to the parent ſtate altogether impoſſible.

The inhuman treatment of the American priſoners by the the Britiſh, was not more remarkable than their inſolence and rapacity towards the people of the country wherever their power extended. The abuſe and contempt poured upon the inhabitants in diſcourſe, and the indiſcriminate plunder of their property, could not but in the moſt powerful manner alienate their affections. Many who hear me at preſent, have had ſo full conviction of this truth in their own experience, that it is unneceſſary to offer any proof of it. It is of importance however to obſerve, that this impolitic oppreſſion was the true and proper cauſe of the general concourſe of the inhabitants of this ſtate to the American ſtandard, in the beginning of the year 1777, and their vigorous exertions ever ſince againſt the incurſions of the enemy from New-York. I confeſs I was not ſo much ſurpriſed at ſuch conduct when

they poſſeſſed this part of the country; becauſe they were then fluſhed with victory, and had ſcarcely an idea that they would fail of final ſucceſs. But when we conſider that their conduct has been the ſame, or even worſe, in the ſouthern ſtates, we can hardly help wondering at their infatuation. Surely there was time enough before the year 1780, to have convinced them that inſolence and cruelty were not the means of bringing back a revolted people; and yet by all accounts their treatment of the inhabitants in Georgia, South and North-Carolina, in that year, was even more barbarous than had been experienced by the people here three years before.

I ſhall only further mention, that it ſeems plainly to have been not by accident, but in conſequence of general orders or a prevailing diſpoſition, that they treated wherever they went, places of public worſhip (except thoſe of the epiſcopal denomination,) with all poſſible contempt and inſult. They were in general uſed not only for hoſpitals, but ſtorehouſes, barracks, riding ſchools and priſons, and in many places they were torn to pieces wantonly and without any purpoſe, to be ſerved by it, but wreaking their vengeance on the former poſſeſſors. What influence muſt this have had upon the minds of the people? What impreſſion muſt have been made upon the few who remained, and were witneſſes to theſe acts of profanation, when in thoſe places where they had been accuſtomed to hear nothing but the word and the worſhip of God, their ears were ſtunned with the horrid ſound of curſing and blaſphemy. This was done very early in Boſton, and repeated in every part of the continent with increaſing rage.

I have choſen on this part of the ſubject to inſiſt only on what was general, and therefore muſt be ſuppoſed to have had an extenſive influence. It would have been eaſy to have collected many particular acts of barbarity, but as theſe might be accounted for from the degeneracy and ſavage diſpoſition of the perſons who were ſeverally guilty of them, they would not have been ſo concluſive for the purpoſe for which they were adduced. I ſhall therefore omit every thing of this kind, except one of the earli-

eſt inſtances of their barbarity, becauſe it happened in one of the ſtreets of this place, viz. maſſacreing in cold blood, a miniſter of the goſpel, who was not, nor ever had been in arms, and received his death wound, while on his knees begging mercy.

Upon the whole nothing appears to me more manifeſt than that the ſeparation of this country from Britain, has been of God; for every ſtep the Britiſh took to prevent, ſerved to accelerate it, which has generally been the caſe when men have undertaken to go in oppoſition to the courſe of providence, and to make war with the nature of things.

I proceed to make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction. And,

In the firſt place, it is our duty to give praiſe to God for the preſent happy and promiſing ſtate of public affairs. This is what we are called to, and making profeſſion of, by our meeting together at the preſent time. Let it then be more than a form. Let the diſpoſition of your hearts be correſpondent to the expreſſions of your lips. While we, who are here alive before God this day, recollect with tenderneſs and ſympathy, with ſurviving relations the many valuable lives that have been loſt in the courſe of the war, let us give thanks to God who hath ſpared us as monuments of his mercy, who hath given us the ſatisfaction of ſeeing our complete deliverance approaching, and thoſe liberties civil and religious for which we have been contending eſtabliſhed upon a laſting foundation. It will be remembered by many, that I have early and conſtantly expreſſed my diſapprobation of ſelf confidence, and vainglorious boaſting. To many American ſoldiers I have ſaid, ſeldom boaſt of what you have done, but never of what you only mean to do. This was not occaſioned by any doubt or heſitation I ever had as to the probable iſſue of the war, from the apparent ſtate of things, and the courſe of human events, but by a deep conviction of the ſinfulneſs of this practice, either in a nation or perſon. Now therefore that we have come ſo far in oppoſition to a formidable enemy, it is certainly our duty to ſay that "ſalvati-

"on belongeth unto the Lord." This indeed is not only the duty of every perſon with reſpect to what is paſt, but is the way to ſupport and animate us in what remains of the warfare, and diſpoſe us to make a ſuitable improvement of the ſettlement which we hope is not very diſtant.

2. We ought to teſtify our gratitude to God for the many ſignal interpoſitions of his providence on our behalf, by living in his fear and by a converſation ſuch as becometh the goſpel. This is not only a tribute we owe to him for every mercy, and therefore for thoſe of a public nature, but it is the only way by which public proſperity can become a real mercy to us, eternity is of yet greater moment than any earthly bleſſing. Their ſtate is little to be envied who are free as citizens, but ſlaves as ſinners. All temporal comforts derive their value from their being the fruits of divine goodneſs, the evidence of covenant love and the earneſt of everlaſting mercy. It is therefore our indiſpenſible duty to endeavor to obtain the ſanctified improvement of every bleſſing, whether public or perſonal. There is the greater neceſſity of inſiſting on this at preſent, that though a time of national ſuffering or jeopardy has ſome advantages for alarming the conſciences of the ſecure, it hath alſo ſome diſadvantages, and frequently occaſions ſuch diſtraction of mind as is little favourable to the practice of piety. We know by ſad experience that the regular adminiſtration of divine ordinances, the obſervation of the Sabbath, and the good order of the country in general have been much diſturbed by the war. The public ſervice ſeemed many times to juſtify what would otherwiſe have been highly improper. This contributed to introduce a licentiouſneſs of practice, and to protect thoſe from reſtraint or reproof, who I am afraid in many caſes, rather yielded to inclination than ſubmitted to neceſſity. Now therefore, when by the bleſſing of God our diſtreſſes are removed, we ought to return to punctuality as to public order, as well as conſcientious ſtrictneſs in every part of our practice.

3. In the third place it is our duty, to teſtify our gratitude to God, by uſefulneſs in our ſeveral ſtations, or in other words by a concern for the glory of God, the

public intereſt of religion, and the good of others. This is the duty of every perſon, even of the loweſt ſtation, at all times. Even the meaneſt and moſt unconnected hath ſtill ſome ſmall bounds, within which his influence and example may be uſeful. But it is eſpecially the duty of thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed from others by their talents, by their ſtation, or by office and authority. I ſhall at preſent conſider it chiefly as the duty of two ſorts of perſons, miniſters and magiſtrates, thoſe who have the direction of religious ſocieties, and thoſe who are veſted with civil authority. As to the firſt of theſe, they are under the ſtrongeſt obligations to holineſs and uſefulneſs in their own lives, and diligence in doing good to others. The world expects it from them, and demands it of them. Many of this claſs of men, have been peculiarly the objects of the hatred and deteſtation of the enemy, in the courſe of this war. Such therefore as have been ſpared to ſee the return of peace and ſecurity, are bound by the ſtrongeſt ties, to improve their time and talents, in their maſter's ſervice. But what I have peculiarly in view, is ſtrickneſs in religious diſcipline, or the inſpection of the morals of their ſeveral ſocieties. By our excellent conſtitution, they are well ſecured in their religious liberty. The return which is expected from them to the community, is that by the influence of their religious government, their people may be the more regular citizens, and the more uſeful members of ſociety. I hope none here will deny that the manners of the people in general, are of the utmoſt moment to the ſtability of any civil ſociety. When the body of a people, are altogether corrupt in their manners, the government is ripe for diſſolution. Good laws may hold the rotten bark ſome longer together, but in a little time all laws muſt give way to the tide of popular opinion, and be laid proſtate under univerſal practice. Hence it clearly follows, that the teachers and rulers of every religious denomination, are bound mutually to each other, and to the whole ſociety, to watch over the manners of their ſeveral members.

(2) Thoſe who are veſted with civil authority, ought alſo with much care, to promote religion and good morals among all under their government. If we give credit to the holy ſcriptures, he that ruleth muſt be juſt, ruling in the fear of God. It is a truth of no little importance to us in our preſent ſituation, not only that the manners of a people are of conſequence to the ſtability of every civil ſociety; but that they are of much more conſequence to free ſtates, than to thoſe of a different kind. In many of theſe laſt, a principle of honor and the ſubordination of ranks, with the vigor of deſpotic authority, ſupply the place of virtue, by reſtraining irregularities and producing public order. But in free ſtates, where the body of the people have the ſupreme power, properly in their own hands, and muſt be ultimately reſorted to on all great matters, if there be a general corruption of manners, there can be nothing but confuſion. So true is this, that civil liberty cannot be long preſerved without virtue. A monarchy may ſubſiſt for ages, and be better or worſe under a good or bad prince; but a republic once equally poiſed, muſt either preſerve its virtue or loſe its liberty, and by ſome tumultuous revolution, either return to its firſt principles, or aſſume a more unhappy form.

From this reſults a double duty, that of the people themſelves, who have the appointment of rulers, and that of their repreſentatives, who are intruſted with the exerciſe of this delegated authority. Thoſe who wiſh well to the ſtate ought to chuſe to places of truſt, men of inward principle, juſtified by exemplary converſation. Is it reaſonable to expect wiſdom from the ignorant, fidelity from the profligate, aſſiduity and application to public buſineſs from men of a diſſipated life? Is it reaſonable to commit the management of public revenue, to one who hath waſted his own patrimony? Thoſe therefore who pay no regard to religion and ſobriety, in the perſons whom they ſend to the legiſlature of any ſtate, are guilty of the greateſt abſurdity, and will ſoon pay dear for their folly. Let a man's zeal, profeſſion, or even principles as to political meaſures be what they will, if he is without perſonal integrity and private virtue, as a

man he is not to be truſted. I think we have had ſome inſtances of men who have roared for liberty in taverns, and were moſt noiſy in public meetings, who yet have turned traitors in a little time. Suffer me on this ſubject to make another remark. I have not yet heard of any Chriſtian ſtate in which there were not laws againſt immorality. But with what judgment will they be made, or with what vigor will they be executed, by thoſe who are profane and immoral in their own practice? Let me ſuppoſe a magiſtrate on the bench of juſtice, adminiſtring an oath to a witneſs, or paſſing ſentence of death on a criminal, and putting him in mind of a judgment to come. With what propriety, dignity, or force can any of theſe be done by one who is known to be a blaſphemer or an infidel, by whom in his convivial hours every thing that is ſerious and ſacred is treated with ſcorn?

But if the people in general ought to have regard to the moral character of thoſe whom they inveſt with authority, either in the legiſlative, executive or judicial branches, ſuch as are ſo promoted may perceive what is and will be expected from them. They are under the ſtrongeſt obligations to do their utmoſt to promote religion, ſobriety, induſtry, and every ſocial virtue, among thoſe who are committed to their care. If you aſk me what are the means which civil rulers are bound to uſe for attaining theſe ends, further than the impartial ſupport and faithful guardianſhip of the rights of conſcience; I anſwer that example itſelf is none of the leaſt. Thoſe who are in high ſtation and authority, are expoſed to continual obſervation; and therefore their example is both better ſeen and hath greater influence than that of perſons of inferior rank. I hope it will be no offence in ſpeaking to a Chriſtian aſſembly, if I ſay that reverence for the name of God, a punctual attendance on the public and private duties of religion, as well as ſobriety and purity of converſation, are eſpecially incumbent on thoſe who are honored with places of power and truſt.

But I cannot content myſelf with this. It is certainly the official duty of magiſtrates to be "a terror to evil doers, "and a praiſe to them that do well." That ſociety will

ſuffer greatly, in which there is no care taken to reſtrain open vice by exemplary puniſhment. It is often to be remarked, in ſome of the corrupt governments of Europe, that whatever ſtrictneſs may be uſed, or even impartiality in rendering juſtice between man and man, yet there is a total and abſolute relaxation as to what is chiefly and immediately a contempt of God. Perhaps a ſmall treſpaſs of a poor man on property, ſhall be purſued by a vindictive party, or puniſhed by a tyrannical judge with the utmoſt ſeverity; when all the laws againſt ſwearing, ſabbath-breaking, lewdneſs, drunkenneſs and riot, ſhall be a dead letter, and more trampled upon by the judges themſelves, than by the people who are to be judged. Thoſe magiſtrates who would have their authority both reſpected and uſeful, ſhould begin at the ſource, and reform or reſtrain that impiety towards God, which is the true and proper cauſe of every diſorder among men. O the ſhortſightedneſs of human wiſdom, to hope to prevent the effect, and yet nouriſh the cauſe! Whence come diſhoneſty and petty thefts? I ſay, from idleneſs, ſabbath-breaking, and uninſtructed families. Whence come deceits of greater magnitude, and debts unpaid? From ſloth, luxury, and extravagance. Whence come violence, hatred, and ſtrife? From drunkenneſs, rioting, lewdneſs, and blaſphemy. It is common to ſay of a diſſolute liver, that he does harm to none but himſelf; than which I think there is not a greater falſhood that ever obtained credit in a deceived world. Drunkards, ſwearers, profane and laſcivious jeſters, and the whole tribe of thoſe who do harm to none but themſelves, are the peſts of ſociety, the corruptors of the youth, and in my opinion, for the riſk of infection, thieves and robbers are leſs dangerous companions.

Upon the whole, my brethren, after we have contended in arms for liberty from foreign domination, let us guard againſt uſing our liberty as a cloak for licentiouſneſs; and thus poiſoning the bleſſing after we have attained it. Let us endeavor to bring into, and keep in credit and reputation, every thing that may ſerve to give vigor to an equal republican conſtitution. Let us cheriſh

a love of piety, order, induſtry, frugality. Let us check every diſpoſition to luxury, effeminacy, and the pleaſures of a diſſipated life. Let us in public meaſures put honor upon modeſty, and ſelf-denial, which is the index of real merit. And in our families let us do the beſt by religious inſtruction, to ſow the ſeeds which may bear fruit in the next generation. We are one of the body of confederated ſtates. For many reaſons, I ſhall avoid making any compariſons at preſent, but may venture to predict, that whatſoever ſtate among us ſhall continue to make piety and virtue the ſtandard of public honor, will enjoy the greateſt inward peace, the greateſt national happineſs, and in every outward conflict will diſcover the greateſt conſtitutional ſtrength.

SEASONABLE ADVICE TO YOUNG PERSONS.

A

SERMON

ON

PSALM i. 1.

Preached at the Laigh Church of PAISLEY, on Sabbath, February 21ſt, 1762.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

An Authentic Narrative, of the disorderly and riotous meeting, on the Night before the Celebration of the Lord's Supper in that place, which gave occasion to the Discourse.

TO

ROBERT FULTON, Esq.
CHARLES MAXWELL,
WILLIAM ORR,
} Bailies.
ANDREW SMITH, Treasurer.
And the remanent members of the Town-Council of PAISLEY,

The following Sermon is humbly inscribed, by their

Most Obedient,

Humble Servant,

JOHN WITHERSPOON.

TO THE

PUBLIC.

THE publication of the following ſermon, is not owing to choice, but neceſſity. A proceſs of ſcandal was carried on againſt the perſons who gave occaſion to its being preached; and they, inſtead of any ſubmiſſion or penitence, thought proper to make heavy complaints againſt the author of the ſermon; and to give an account of what was ſaid in it, very imperfect and unjuſt, as may well be ſuppoſed. In anſwer to this, he found it neceſſary to declare his willingneſs and reſolution to publiſh the ſermon, and to prefix a diſtinct narration of the proceedings, ſo far as they had come to light, of that impious aſſembly, held within the bounds of his charge, that the public might judge whether there was not more than ſufficient cauſe given for what was then ſaid. By the following narrative and ſermon he now propoſes to acquit himſelf of both parts of this promiſe.

On Saturday the 6th of February, 1762, being the day before the celebration of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper in Paiſley, ſome young men, who it is generally believed had all been at church, dined immediately after ſermon in James Chambers's room. After dinner, Robert Hunter, who never was a communicant, produced one of the church tokens, well knowing what uſe it was intended to ſerve. Being aſked where he got it, ſaid he got it from Judas Iſcariot; and, as one of the company declares, offered to play odds or evens with him which of them ſhould uſe it. They were then invited all to a glaſs in William Wilſon's room, which he choſe that night to take poſſeſſion of; and indeed to give it a very dreadful

conſecration. In the interval of their meeting, Robert Hunter ſent the token to a young woman in the place, incloſed in a letter. What were the contents of the letter cannot be known. Common fame ſaid it was inviting her to their ſacrament: he himſelf pretended it was very innocent, but took care, as ſoon as the rumour broke up, to get the letter and burn it. The reader will immediately reflect what could be the intention, and what might have been the effects of this conduct: it was eaſy in this way, to ſend the moſt notorious profligate to the table of the Lord, to the unſpeakable ſcandal of the congregation, as well as miſchief to his own ſoul.

About ſix of the clock the ſame evening, or ſoon after, they met according to appointment in William Wilſon's room, the ſaid Robert Hunter, and William Wilſon, manufacturers in Paiſley, John Snodgraſs, writer there, William M'Crotchet, enſign or ſerjeant in the army, James and David Chalmers, and Robert Croſs junior, merchants in Paiſley. By their own confeſſion, and the depoſition of ſeveral witneſſes, they employed a good part of the time in mock-preaching, and that not merely imitating the tones or geſtures of miniſters in indifferent words, but the only expreſſions that were diſtinguiſhed by the witneſſes who heard them on the ſtreet, were the words of ſcripture. Two witneſſes depone, that to the beſt of their judgment, they heard them praying in mockery; and when aſked if they were ſure it was praying and not preaching, perſiſted in affirming it was praying. The only uncertainty this evidence labors under, is, that not hearing the particular words uſed, the only way by which they diſtinguiſhed it, was by the ſound; but it is to be obſerved, that both witneſſes were poſitive; that they agreed together as to the time when this happened, and that it was not the ſame time that the other witneſſes depone they were preaching, but at a very conſiderable diſtance; ſo that there is little probability of the one being miſtaken for the other. By their own confeſſions, and the depoſitions of witneſſes, they were guilty of profane ſwearing. The noiſe of their meeting was ſuch, as alarmed the whole neighborhood; but what is moſt tremendous of all, by the declaration of

Robert Hunter, one of themſelves, William M'Crotchet, uſed ſome of the words of the inſtitution. The ſame thing is declared by William Wilſon, of John Snodgraſs; and upon the ſtricteſt re-examination he perſiſted in declaring that he was certain it was done in the company, and he thought it was by that perſon.

When theſe facts are laid together, and all the circumſtances of the tranſaction are weighed, is it poſſible in words to paint the atrociouſneſs of their crime? Is there any ground to wonder at the greatneſs of the ſcandal? Is there reaſon to complain, that the miniſter in whoſe bounds the offence was committed, and under whoſe charge almoſt all the offenders live, ſhould think of preaching on ſuch a ſubject as it appears he did; and now with concern finds himſelf obliged to publiſh? The very choice of ſuch a night for ſuch a merry meeting, and the diſturbance given to the place almoſt to the hour of midnight, though there had been no more in it, were ſurely highly indecent. But when we add to this the loud profanation of the Almighty's name, and ſpending the moſt part, if not the whole of the time, in mocking the exerciſes of piety, how deep and aggravated is the guilt! Above all, when it is conſidered that this ſeems to have been without bounds, not ſparing even the moſt ſolemn and ſacred rite of our holy religon! It is true, ſome of them obſtinately deny this laſt, and heavieſt part of the charge. It doth not indeed appear, and we hope it is not true, that there was a formal celebration, and general or common participation in mockery, of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper; but if there had been no profane alluſion to it in the performances of the acting mimies, it is not to be ſuppoſed or imagined, that it would have been confeſſed by two of the perſons preſent. Though this ſhould not militate againſt the reſt, it certainly muſt militate againſt themſelves. The time of the meeting; the token produced before it; the letter with the token ſent; the other things which they certainly did; and the unſuſpected declaration of two of the guilty; who ſeemed at firſt penitent, though afterwards they altered their conduct, and joined with the reſt in a common defence; are ſo ſtrong,

that it is impoſſible to deſtroy the belief of it in an impartial mind; the rather when we add, that afterwards David Chalmers confeſſed it ſtill more fully than any of the other two. This, though it was too late to be in the proceſs, or rather by great art and influence kept out of it, may be ſafely affirmed, becauſe it was in the preſence of three perſons. But to cut the matter ſhort, the uſe of ſome of the words of the inſtitution with a ſolemn air as of a miniſter, and alſo ſome of the other words of ſcripture, is affirmed, by William Wilſon, of John Snodgraſs, in a voluntary declaration, when he was not adduced as an evidence. Let John Sondgraſs therefore, who conſiders this as ſo injurious to him, proſecute William Wilſon for ſlander, and get him puniſhed in the manner he juſtly deſerves, if it be falſe; and if this is not done, he muſt forgive many, and particularly the author of the following ſermon, for believing it to be true.

SEASONABLE ADVICE TO YOUNG PERSONS.

A

SERMON.

PSALM i. 1.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

THERE is an old and beaten obſervation, that human nature, in all ages, is the ſame. To this I add, or rather offer, by way of illuſtration of it, that ſin, which bears ſo much ſway in human characters and actions, has been the ſame, in its operation and influence, in all ages, ſince the fall of Adam. For this reaſon the characters drawn in the holy ſcriptures, and particularly the obſervations on human life, contained in the Pſalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, and book of Eccleſiaſtes, are as perfectly adapted to the preſent age, as if they were but of yeſterday's date.

As the ten commandments, which are the ſum of the moral law, conſiſt moſtly of prohibitions, the Pſalmiſt, in this paſſage, draws the character of the good man in a negative form, by its oppoſition to the bad. At the ſame time, the danger to which the unwary are expoſed, the enticing and deceitful nature of ſin, and its monſtrous enormity, when arrived at its full height, are couched in the

moſt admirable manner: "Bleſſed is the man that walk-
"eth not in the counſel of the ungodly;—nor ſtandeth in
"the way of ſinners;—nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the
"ſcornful."

It is not agreed among interpreters, who was the author of this Pſalm; and, indeed, it is a matter more of curioſity than moment, very critically to inquire. Some think it was the Pſalmiſt David, becauſe of the high eſteem expreſſed in it for the law of God, a thing which ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhes his other writings. Others refer it to a later period; and ſuppoſe that Ezra, or ſome other after the captivity, who collected the ſacred hymns of different authors into one volume, prefixed this as a ſort of argument or preface to the whole. It is, indeed, a ſummary of all that follow. It plainly contains a character both of good men and bad; the uſual courſe of divine Providence towards each of theſe claſſes, as well as the final iſſue of their conduct, in the everlaſting happineſs of the one, and the everlaſting miſery of the other.

Even the moſt curſory reader muſt obſerve, that there is a gradation in the expreſſions of the text, which riſe one above another in their ſtrength and energy: nay, it is the opinion of many, that they are choſen with peculiar art, and contain a double, if not a threefold gradation.

1. In the character, beginning with the *ungodly*, who are without proper impreſſions of religion, and habitually governed by other principles than the fear of God. Next, *ſinners*, or thoſe who are more openly flagitious, and viſibly guilty of groſs crimes. And finally, the *ſcornful*, who ſet reproof at defiance, and treat every thing ſerious and ſacred with contempt and diſdain.

2. In the communication of others with them, *walking*; which ſeems to imply occaſional, unforeſeen, and tranſient intercourſe;—*ſtanding*, which ſeems to indicate a greater degree of approbation and voluntary compliance with their example;—and *ſitting*, which ſignifies being fixed and ſettled in an evil courſe, and refuſing to depart from it.——To this ſome add the other expreſſions, the *counſel*, the *way*, and the *ſeat*; on which I forbear to inſiſt, but proceed to obſerve,

That we have, in this paſſage, a moſt uſeful and inſtructive leſſon of great moment in every place and age; and peculiarly ſuited, on ſeveral accounts, to the preſent circumſtances of this congregation. It is, therefore, my reſolution to diſcourſe a little, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, on the three diſtinct branches into which it may be naturally divided.

I. The infectious nature of ſin, or the danger of "walking in the counſel of the ungodly."

II. The deceitful and hardening nature of ſin, which inſenſibly leads from "walking in the counſel of the ungodly," to "ſtanding in the way of ſinners."

III. The finiſhing ſtage of wickedneſs, the moſt criminal and moſt pernicious character, viz, of the *ſcornful*, who are bold enough to treat things ſerious and ſacred with deriſion.

Having done this, I ſhall make ſome application of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction.

In the firſt place, let us conſider the infectious nature of ſin, or the danger of walking in the counſel of the ungodly. That the ſociety of bad men is highly dangerous to all, but eſpecially to young perſons, is indeed a truth which no ſober man will deny, and which hath been often ſet in the ſtrongeſt light by religious and moral writers: it may therefore ſeem unneceſſary to inſiſt upon it. But, my brethren, I am perſuaded, that it fares often with known and common truths, as with common mercies, they are deſpiſed for their cheapneſs. Though their certainty be readily allowed, their uſe and application is, notwithſtanding, or, perhaps, for that very reaſon, in a great meaſure neglected. How ſeldom is it that men make the diſtinction with care, and act upon it with prudence and reſolution; either in their own conduct, or in the diſpoſal of their children? Bear with me, therefore, while I endeavor to impreſs your minds with a ſenſe of your obligation to depart from the ſociety of evil-doers, and to preſerve, with the utmoſt ſolicitude, all young perſons under your care, from the mortal contagion.

For the importance and neceſſity of this, you have the concurrent teſtimony of wiſe and good men, in every age and nation; experience hath taught it to the moſt barbarous, as well as moſt improved and poliſhed people. There is no nation of which hiſtory hath preſerved us any account, but, in their proverbial ſayings, which are the product of time, we find a warning againſt the infection of corrupt ſociety. What dying parent, in his laſt or parting adieu to his children, ever omitted to caution them againſt the ſociety of bad men? nay, doth not daily experience prove this, beyond diſpute, to every one who hath the leaſt degree either of memory or reflection? Is there among you any perſon, who has arrived at the unhappy diſtinction of being known for a profligate? Whenever this happens, thoſe about him are able to mark the progreſs of his corruption, and can even point out the perſons, or ſocieties, where he was firſt taught the rudiments of vice, and initiated in the principles of licentiouſneſs and riot. I am none of thoſe who either deny or conceal the original inherent, univerſal corruption of human nature; and yet I ſcruple not to affirm, that example, inſtruction, and aſſiſtance, are neceſſary to our improvement even in vice. Without this, no ſingle perſon is capable of arriving at that degree of depravity which we have ſometimes occaſion to obſerve.

Whoever would examine into the reaſons, and impreſs his mind with a ſenſe of the danger of corrupt ſociety, eſpecially to youth, may juſt reflect upon the following particulars.

1. We are all by nature prone to ſin. It is the growth of the ſoil, as weeds of the curſed ground. If weeds can hardly be reſtrained by the utmoſt diligence and care of the huſbandman, what an enormous product might he expect if he would directly apply himſelf to their encouragement and cultivation? Juſt ſo, if by the utmoſt care and attention parents can hardly reſtrain the irregularities of their children, and form them to true piety and goodneſs; what wickedneſs may they not arrive at, if they are delivered over to ſchools of profanity, and ſuffered to form their ſentiments and manners, from thoſe who have long "walked

" in the ways of their own hearts, and in the sight of their " own eyes," without " fearing God, or regarding man?"

2. Young persons are ignorant and unsuspicious; strangers to the world, they are alike ignorant of the characters of men, and the effects of vicious courses. What a prey must such be to the artful and insinuating language of those, who, enslaved by habit, and wearing the chains of vice, find their chief remaining pleasure in seducing others into the same miserable state? Justly is the great enemy of mankind called the deceiver, because he betrayed our first parents into rebellion by a lie; and in the same way he and all his servants continue to paint and varnish over sin with false colours, that it may be embraced without reluctance, by those who know not that afterwards " it biteth " like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Need I tell you in what a decent garb sin is often clothed; and what honorable names it often assumes in the world, to gain the easier admission? Sensuality and intemperance is social affection, and good fellowship: filthy obscene conversation is but harmless mirth and freedom: anger and resentment is but honor, resolution, and dignity of mind. In short, the whole tenor and strain of fashionable conversation is often little else than a strong illusion put upon the mind, to pervert the dictates of reason, and evade the reproofs of conscience. How dangerous such intercourse to young unwary minds, who are often deeply penetrated with the poison, before they so much as suspect the design of its being administered? It requires no common degree of fortitude and resolution, as well as no small measure of spiritual wisdom, to resist the importunity of sinners, and unravel the subtilty with which they lie in wait to deceive.

3. Vice is usually baited with pleasure, of which young persons are peculiarly sensible: their affections of every kind are in the most lively and vigorous state. One of the first and most important lessons, which parents and guardians must teach them, is moderation and restraint; whereas the immediate effect of associating with the profane, is not only to strengthen their passions by indulgence, but to instruct them how to plead in their defence; and above all, to inspire them with an abhorrence of confine-

ment and rule. From these unhappy attachments, these most pernicious friendships it is, that instruction, however excellent, is unwillingly listened to; and the most wise and gentle government is esteemed harsh and severe. It has been sometimes observed, that persons strictly and piously educated, when they have come into the world, have run headlong into the most vicious and abandoned course of life. This has been commonly ascribed to the rigor of their former confinement, and an advice grafted upon it, that parents should be less severe to their children, lest they should more than compensate this early restraint, by the liberties which they afterwards assume. But though I willingly admit, that every parent should temper his authority with gentleness and love; yet I am far from thinking the effect, just now mentioned, is ascribed to its proper cause; it is not owing so much to the rigor of parental authority, as to young persons getting into the society of men without principle, and there secretly imbibing these vicious desires, which afterwards they rejoice in an opportunity of gratifying to the full. However strict and severe any person's education may be, if he comes to maturity of age, before he contracts an intimacy with those who justify the commission of sin, conscience will have acquired so great authority, that all solicitation to gross wickedness will be received with abhorrence. This opinion is supported by a fact, which I imagine I have observed, that the children of pious parents, who are betrayed into vicious courses, are almost always such as have been most early removed from their immediate inspection.

4. The danger of corrupt society to young persons appears, from their being exposed to ridicule and scorn, which is of all other trials hardest for them to bear. I shall have occasion, on the third general head, to speak more fully on this subject; but in the mean time, it is certain, that a sense of shame is strong in young persons in general, and that ridicule is the usual weapon, by which adepts in vice assault the cause of truth and piety; by which indeed they commonly endeavor to destroy all regard to decency and order. It is lamentable to think, how often persons of excellent capacity, and admirable dispositions,

have been led aſtray by the abuſe of this moſt amiable quality, a ſenſe of ſhame.

From all theſe conſiderations, we need not be ſurpriſed at the frequent and ſtrong cautions given in the word of God, upon this ſubject: Prov. xiii. 20. "He that walketh "with wiſe men ſhall be wiſe: but a companion of fools "ſhall be deſtroyed."—Chap. xxviii. 7. "Whoſo keep-"eth the law, is a wiſe ſon; but he that is a companion "of riotous men, ſhameth his father." But there is nothing more moving than that earneſt and pathetic exhortation; Chap. iv. 14, 15. "Enter not into the path of "the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid "it: paſs not by it: turn from it and paſs away." The wiſe man's inſiſting upon his important counſel, and the reiteration of the expreſſions, ſerves to convey, in the ſtrongeſt manner, a ſenſe of the certain ruin of thoſe who neglect to obſerve it.

II. Let us now proceed to conſider the hardening nature of ſin, which leads from "walking in the counſel "of the ungodly, to ſtanding in the way of ſinners." Upon this, as on the former particular, I may obſerve, it is a known and beaten ſubject, on which it is eaſy to ſay things ſtrong, but difficult to ſay any thing new. There are ſeveral juſt remarks upon it, or ſtriking ſimilitudes, which have been handed down from the earlieſt ages; and were probably the firſt fruits of human experience. The little that I am at preſent to repeat or add, ſhall be divided into two parts: 1. The gradual and inſenſible progreſs of ſin, which leads the ſinner on from one ſtep to another, till he is irrecoverably loſt. 2. The ſtrength and power of inveterate habit.

1. The inſenſible progreſs of ſin. It is wonderful by what artful methods, what plauſible pretences, and what ſlow degrees, ſin makes its firſt approaches. Let ſome of thoſe perſons who are now loſt to all ſenſe of duty, or of ſhame, reflect, if poſſible, with what horror they would once have thought of the practices, which at preſent they are not able to forſake. Every ſin, how ſmall ſoever, opens a paſſage for the admiſſion of multitudes of others; breaks the reſtraint of conſcience; habituates and embol-

dens the ſinner. The ancients were wont to ſay, That the way of ſin is down-hill: every ſtep a man takes on this declivity, accelerates his motion, ſo that it becomes more and more difficult, and at laſt impoſſible, to ſtop his courſe. This is what the apoſtle Paul had in his view, when he gave this excellent precept to the Chriſtian Hebrews; Heb. iii. 13. "But exhort one another daily, "while it is called to-day, leſt any of you be hardened "through the deceitfulneſs of ſin." We may ſay of ſin, in general, what Solomon ſays of ſtrife; "The beginning "of it is like the letting out of water." If you watch againſt the beginning of ſin, you may hope to prevail; but if you once grant it indulgence, it will eſtabliſh and increaſe its own power. To attempt then to ſtop its progreſs, is like endeavoring to gather together a flood of water, after you have, with your own hands, opened the the ſluices which have cauſed it to overflow.

2. To the inſenſible progreſs of ſin, add the ſtrength and power of inveterate habit. This is repreſented to us in the ſtrongeſt terms in ſcripture, where the changing of an inveterate habit is compared to a natural impoſſibility: Jer. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the "leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good, that are "accuſtomed to do evil."

As we may receive many uſeful moral leſſons from the viſible creation and the courſe of nature; ſo this in particular, of the force of habit, is, if I may ſpeak ſo, written in the moſt legible characters, and repeated in every page of both. A ſtone, which has long continued in one place, makes itſelf a bed, and is with great difficulty removed: a plant or tree that has long been confined to one poſition, or made to grow in a particular ſhape, will ſeldom ever receive any other. This is alſo the caſe with our own bodily frame. Particular poſtures or motions to which we have been early habituated, can ſcarcely be altered by the utmoſt attention, and the ſtrongeſt inclination of the will: the obſtinacy is ſtill greater in all habits where deſire and affection have place. It is eaſy to ſee every day, the violent attachment men have to employments and pleaſures, however trifling in themſelves, to which they have been

long accuſtomed. But it is greateſt of all in ſinful habits, becauſe in them the force of cuſtom is added to the original ſtrength of natural corruption.

Both the above particulars may be illuſtrated, by obſerving, how much habit and example together operate to the improvement and perfection of guilt, in large and populous cities. There we may often find ſo aſtoniſhing a degree of wickedneſs of every ſort, as it is mortifying to think that human nature ſhould be capable of: there we may find perſons who will perpetrate calmly and ſedately, what would ſurprize a leſs knowing ſinner ſo much as to hear of. And what pity is it, that there ſhould be found ſome, who, during their occaſional reſidence in places of great reſort, lay down their innocence, inſtead of their ruſticity; and bring home no other accompliſhment but an inſolence and boldneſs of countenance, in the commiſſion of ſin? That inſtructed in the principles, as well as habituated to the practice of impiety, they are not content with doing evil, but diſcover an incredible induſtry and aſſiduity in deceiving and ſeducing others. And ſhall I not add, what pity is it, that ſome, inſtead of improving and adorning their minds by application to ſtudy, or ſtoring them with uſeful knowledge, do more than loſe their time, by drinking in the poiſon of infidel writings? Inſtead of fitting themſelves to diſcharge the duties of public or private life, with propriety and dignity, they only acquire the unhappy talent of ſetting their minds at eaſe in the commiſſion of ſin, and make large additions to their own natural depravity of heart.

III. Let us conſider the finiſhing ſtage of wickedneſs, the moſt criminal and the moſt pernicious character, viz. that of the ſcornful, who are bold enough to treat things ſerious and ſacred, with deriſion.

This part of the ſubject, my brethren, merits your particular attention, and naturally divides itſelf into theſe two branches: Firſt, The ſin and danger of it to the perſons who are guilty of it. Secondly, The unhappy influence it hath in polluting others.

1. The ſin and danger of it to the guilty perſons. Whoever will conſider the ſtate of mind from which ſuch deriſion muſt flow, will immediately perceive that it implies the higheſt degree of profaneneſs and impiety. It is ſuch an audacious attack upon the majeſty of the living God, as muſt ſtrike every thinking perſon with aſtoniſhment and horror. One of the firſt principles of all religion is reverence for the Deity, and for every thing that hath a viſible relation to him. This we find written upon the conſcience, in general, even of the moſt blinded heathens. The common and trivial uſe of the name of God is prohibited under the ſevereſt ſanctions in the oracles of truth. We find alſo ſome inſtances there, of mere irreverence being puniſhed in a very terrible manner. The angelic hoſts, though perfectly pure and holy, are yet repreſented as deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of the extreme diſproportion between uncreated excellence, and created weakneſs, and filled with the higheſt veneration of him who only is HOLY: Iſa. vi. 1, 2, 3. "In the year that "king Uzziah died, I ſaw alſo the Lord ſitting upon a "throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. "Above it ſtood the ſeraphims: each one had ſix wings, "with twain he covered his face, and with twain he co-"vered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one "cried unto another, and ſaid, Holy, holy, holy, is the "Lord of hoſts, the whole earth is full of his glory." It may ſeem unneceſſary or improper to add, and yet it gives me pleaſure that I can do it with truth, the ſame thing has evidently diſtinguiſhed ſome of the beſt and greateſt men on earth. We are well informed, that ſome of the greateſt inquirers into nature, as they grew in years, and increaſed in the knowledge of the works of God, did alſo viſibly grow in an awe and reverence of their almighty Maker. Of one in particular, it is ſaid, that he never mentioned the name of God without a ſenſible pauſe in his diſcourſe. After this, what can we think of any poor creature, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils, being guilty of contempt and ſcorn of the name, attributes, works or worſhip of God!

There is a remarkable difference between sins of this kind, and many other sins which are, notwithstanding, very heinous and aggravated in the sight of God. Into many other sins of a very gross nature, a man may be hurried by the violence of passion, or betrayed by the suddenness of temptation; but, if I mistake not, scorn of things sacred must always be a deliberate crime: the sin cannot be committed without a good deal of composure and presence of mind: reason is not over-borne, as in other cases, by appetite; but reason itself (if the perverted gift of God in such persons may be called so) is principal in the guilt. A scorner is never tempted, properly speaking, but by these acts and exercises of religion, which should excite the veneration of all, and do excite the veneration of many, not excepting some of the most profligate.

Contempt of things sacred is an entire victory over conscience. In many cases men sin with some reluctance: it is not so much their choice, as they are over-borne by the strength of corruption, and vitiate the peace of their minds, to gratify the demands of lust: hence remorse often succeeds the indulgence; and though real reformation does not take place, yet it lays the sinner under frequent and considerable restraints. But in treating things sacred with scorn, the mind is wholly at ease; and finds its pleasure in the very impiety itself. The truth is, so entire is the victory over conscience, that nothing but settled atheism and infidelity can be guilty of it, according to that just expression of the psalmist, Psalm x. 13. Wherefore doth "the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, "thou wilt not require it."

It is also an entire victory over shame: this is commonly the last restraint that sinners overthrow. Many are confined and kept in awe by the fear of man, long after they have cast off the fear of God. From the shamefulness of sin, religion preserves some degree of credit, even where a great plurality is in the opposite interest. For this reason the prophet Jeremiah mentions it as a great aggravation of the sins of his countrymen, that they were lost to all sense of shame: Jer. vi. 15. "Were they "ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay,

" they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh ; " therefore they ſhall fall among them that fall : at the " time that I viſit them, they ſhall be caſt down, ſaith the " Lord." But is it not evident, that ſcorners are deſtitute of ſhame ? They have, indeed, not only extinguiſhed it in themſelves, but the manifeſt deſign of their converſation is to deſtroy it in the minds of others.

I need add nothing further to ſhew the guilt and danger of perſons of this character, but putting you in mind of the rank which it holds in ſeveral catalogues of crying ſins in the holy ſcriptures, and the awful judgments of God which are denounced againſt it. The prophet Ezekiel, in enumerating the ſins of Jeruſalem, among many enormities, hath this ; Ezek. xxii. 8. " Thou haſt deſpi- " ſed mine holy things, and profaned my Sabbaths." And the prophet Iſaiah, Iſa. xxviii. 14, 21, 22. Now, " therefore, hear the word of the Lord, ye ſcornful men " that rule this people which is in Jeruſalem.—For the " Lord ſhall riſe up as in mount Perazim, he ſhall be " wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his " work, his ſtrange work ; and bring to paſs his act, his " ſtrange act. Now, therefore, be not mockers, leſt your " bands be made ſtrong : for, I have heard from the Lord " God of hoſts, a conſumption even determined upon the " whole earth." See alſo the ſtate of things in Jeruſalem, immediately before the Babyloniſh captivity : 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. " But they mocked the meſſengers of God, " and deſpiſed his words, and miſuſed his prophets, un- " til the wrath of the Lord aroſe againſt his people, till " there was no remedy."

2. How unhappy is the influence of this character upon others ! As it is highly criminal, it is pernicious in the ſame proportion. Conſidered only as an example, it muſt have dangerous effects : many ſins ſhun the light ; and are, by thoſe that commit them, concealed with the utmoſt care. When that is the caſe, whatever they may be to the guilty perſon, they are far from being ſo dangerous to the public, as thoſe crimes that are not only often viſible, but done on purpoſe to be ſeen. Now, ſcoffers at things ſacred muſt always be an example, as the crime

cannot be committed alone; and, indeed, they often aspire at a kind of character for despising religion, and would be greatly mortified, were their accomplishments of this kind hidden from the world.

Neither is it merely a common example: scoffers are not only barely sinners; they are advocates for sin: it is their constant study to break the restraints of conscience, and weaken every moral obligation in others, as well as in themselves. This too they endeavor to effect in the most agreeable manner: contempt of religion makes a part of their social mirth; and these two things are soon looked upon by the unwary youth as so inseparable, that the one is quite tasteless and insipid, unless it is seasoned by the other.

It deserves particular consideration on this subject, that scoffing at things sacred is apt to give natural modesty, and the sense of shame in young persons, a wrong and contrary turn. Modesty is the strongest natural fence to virtue. We find notwithstanding, very frequently, that persons of great natural modesty have not courage sufficient to profess or practise what conscience dictates to be their duty. How unhappy is it when so excellent a preservative from vice is thus quite perverted, and has an opposite effect! All history is full of the powerful effects of a sense of shame, both in doing good and evil. It breaks the strongest of all natural attachments: it is not to be overcome by the severest laws, though fortified with the most terrible sanctions. Now, as it needs no proof, that scoffing at sacred things tends to pervert the sense of shame, it must have the greatest and most immediate effect in bringing on a general dissolution of manners.

The malignant influence of profane scorn is not confined to young persons, there being very few of any character who are not hurt by it in a most sensible manner. Would you be convinced of this? How rarely do we find any possessed of a determined courage and resolution in opposing fashionable crimes! How unwilling are the best to suffer shame for adhering to their duty! What a variety of efforts will be made to escape it! Contempt is disagreeable at any rate; and it is intolerable to pride, some

remains of which, capable of being irritated, are to be found in the very beſt men on earth. For this reaſon, the moſt eſtabliſhed Chriſtians do carefully ſhun all unneceſſary ſociety with wicked men, knowing how difficult it is to avoid ſin in one ſhape or other. If ſuch is the caſe with the beſt, how dangerous muſt the ſociety of ſcorners be to all who are able to bear them; but eſpecially to thoſe who "have pleaſure in them!"

It will not be improper here to obſerve, that one great reaſon why ſcorn and ridicule is ſo hurtful to religion, is, that it attacks things ſacred through the medium of human weakneſs. True piety and virtue is in itſelf ſo venerable an object, that it is not poſſible to render it ridiculous, but but by miſrepreſention: however, as it is always, in this world, attended with human infirmity, this affords a handle to profane perſons to load it with reproach. Their ſucceſs, in this unhappy deſign, is no greater than may naturally be expected; few are able to diſtinguiſh between a perſon and his cauſe, nor, indeed, is it poſſible to attack the one, without wounding the other. It evidently appears, that it is impoſſible to treat religious perſons in general, or the expreſſions, forms, and rites commonly appropriated to religious worſhip, with ſcorn; and not, at the ſame time, bring religion itſelf into contempt.

I do not mean by this to plead for approbation, or even indulgence, to any indecency, by which folly or vanity may abuſe or diſgrace the worſhip of God: far from it. I think every thing of that kind ought to be reproved with ſeverity, and oppoſed with reſolution: but I contend, that it is infinitely more proper to treat it with abhorrence and deteſtation, than with ſcorn. Whoever will give himſelf this liberty, may eaſily find an opportunity, from the weakneſs inſeparable from humanity, to throw off that reverence for God and his ſervice, which it ought to be his chief ſolicitude to preſerve and improve. There are many whoſe viſible weakneſs is to be lamented; and, perhaps, there is no human character at all ſo perfectly decent in every reſpect, but, by imitation, and a little aggravation, it may be rendered ridiculous.

Let it alſo be conſidered, that it requires far leſs compre-

henſion of mind to expoſe the folly and weakneſs of others, or even to invent plauſible falſehoods, and miſrepreſent them, than to reaſon with juſtneſs and propriety on the moſt common ſubjects: A very ſmall degree of ability is ſufficient to accompliſh a ſcoffer, who is not reſtrained by any ſenſe of duty. Nor is this to be wondered at; for there is always a ſufficient number, to whoſe underſtandings the moſt vile and miſerable performance is perfectly adapted.

In ſupport of all this, I could adduce many examples, abundantly known and familiar: but, for certain reaſons, I ſhall only mention a very celebrated inſtance from antiquity. Socrates was certainly the wiſeſt and the beſt man of all the heathens, whoſe characters have been tranſmitted to us. His behavior was ſuch, as not only deſerved, but ſeemed fit to command the eſteem and veneration of all who knew him: yet was this worthy man ſucceſsfully turned into ridicule, by a perſon, whoſe writings, which have come down to us, are to the laſt degree mean and contemptible. Nor was the effect merely tranſient; for in the opinion of many, this contempt paved the way for the hatred which his enemies ſoon raiſed againſt him, and which brought him to his death.

I proceed now, in the laſt place, to make ſome improvement of what has been ſaid: and I think I can diſcover in the aſpect of the audience, that you already ſuppoſe I have been led to the choice of this ſubject, by the late atrocious and flagrant offence, committed in the near neighborhood of where I now ſtand; and which hath affected every thinking and well-diſpoſed perſon in the place, with a mixture of indignation and concern. That this is indeed the caſe, I have no intention either to deny or conceal. Many, I know, are of opinion, that fidelity to my charge calls for ſomething of this nature on the preſent occaſion: if to others the particular diſcuſſion and application of this ſubject ſhould need any apology, there are two things, for which I hope to have the teſtimony of all my ordinary hearers. 1. That I have never omitted to mention with all freedom and plainneſs, the ſins and

duties of every rank and claſs of men, as the ſubject led to it, or the occaſion ſeemed to require it. 2. That in doing this, I have generally avoided bringing in particular accidents that have fallen out in the place; being much of opinion, that the leſs perſonal any thing of that nature is, it is the more likely to be uſeful. But though I continue in the ſame opinion in general, there are ſome things ſo flagrant and atrocious in their nature, ſo dangerous and hurtful in their effects, that bare ſilence concerning them would carry in it an imputation of unfaithfulneſs, or partiality in a miniſter of Chriſt. And as in the preſent caſe, the ſcandal ſeems loudly to call for ſome public notice of it, ſo it is impoſſible to make the perſons more known than they are already by their own folly. If it could make them any more aſhamed, it would be an unſpeakable benefit both to the public and themſelves.

With a view therefore to the ſcandal juſt now hinted at, ſuffer me to apply the truths above illuſtrated, by giving you ſome advice and direction, under the three following characters, one or more of which will include every perſon who now hears me.

1. To thoſe who are young: in that lovely, precious, dangerous ſeaſon of life; of all others the fitteſt for learning what is good, and unhappily prone to learn or imitate what is evil. My dear children, this is not the firſt of many times I have addreſſed inſtruction particularly to you, and I pray that God may open your hearts to receive it. Let me beſeech you, firſt of all, to learn this important leſſon, to diſtruſt yourſelves, be ſenſible of your inexperience, and be perſuaded of your danger, from the admonitions of others. The greateſt evidence you can give of real knowledge, is to be ſenſible of your ignorance; and of true wiſdom, to be willing to learn: the ſolicitude and concern of your parents or other relations, to preſerve you from the deſtructive paths of vice, is from their certain knowledge of what you are now unwilling to believe. Above all things, ſhun, as the peſtilence, the ſociety of profane ſcorners. Loſt to all ſenſe of piety, ſeared in their conſciences, and enſlaved to their luſts, they will do all in their power to deſtroy a riſing ſenſe of religion in your

minds: "While they promise you liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption." Think upon eternity approaching: no man can foresee or foretell to you now, whether your time on earth shall be long or short; whether you shall have much prosperity, or many trials in the present world; but as the blessing of God is the best ingredient in all temporal mercies, so being at peace with him is the best support under suffering, and the only preparation for death.

But as all the delusive arguments in favor of sin are drawn from this present life, suffer me to plead the cause of piety and truth in this respect. Be assured that true religion is the way to health, peace, opulence and public esteem. Hear the wisest of mere men: Prov. iii. 16, 17. "Length of days is in Wisdom's right hand, and in her "left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of plea- "santness, and all her paths are peace." Do not look only on those libertines who are in the beginning or middle of their course, whose spirits are lively, and their vigor yet unimpaired: look on the few older practitioners. These were the good fellows and social spirits of a former period; their companions were cut off in the middle of their days, and they remain as beacons for your instruction and warning. Do you see them sullen in their deportment, mean in their attire, and despised by the world itself; their faces bloated with intemperance, and their miserable offspring pale with hunger, or crippled by neglect? these are the terrible fruits of midnight rioting. They were once as merry in their cups, as ready with their jests, and as great despisers of Sabbaths, and sermons, of whining and praying, as any of their more sprightly successors, who are in the high road to the same despicable end.

My dear friends, when you perceive any one stirring up your aversion to parental authority, and teaching you to despise the troublesome admonitions of ministers and mothers, know that he is enticing you to the ruin of soul, body, and estate. Hear again the wise man, or rather the Spirit of God speaking by him: Prov. xxiii. 19, &c. "Hear "then, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the

" way: be not amongſt wine bibbers, amongſt riotous " eaters of fleſh; for the drunkard and the glutton ſhall " come to poverty, and drowſineſs ſhall clothe a man with " rags. Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and de- " ſpiſe not thy mother when ſhe is old." Prov. xxx. 17. " The eye that mocketh at his father, and deſpiſeth to " obey his mother, the ravens of the valley ſhall pick it " out, and the young eagles ſhall eat it."

Do you indeed think, that any of your looſe companions, with all their profeſſions of friendſhip and attachment, have the ſame concern for your true intereſt that a parent has; or the ſame judgment to diſcern it? You may eſteem it as a favor when you are aſſiſted in the indulgence of your pleaſures, and your irregular courſes are concealed from the knowledge of your relations; but it is in truth the greateſt injury that can poſſibly be done you: it is often diſtreſſing to thoſe of riper years and more experience, to obſerve how difficult it is to perſuade young perſons of eaſy tempers and warm affections, of the danger of aſſociating with profligates. We reckon it hard that you will not believe that they are worthleſs, upon our teſtimony; but muſt learn it from your own fatal experience. Believe it, there is no true friendſhip but what is founded on the principles of piety and virtue: and if you confide in thoſe of a different character, you will ſooner or later be rewarded with treachery and falſehood: and indeed, the ſooner the better; for their friendſhip is infinitely more hurtful than any effects of their diſpleaſure. Again therefore, let me beſeech the younger part of my audience, who have not yet themſelves thrown off all regard to decency, to give up all friendſhip with, and avoid the ſociety, of thoſe who have. It is uſually a hard ſacrifice, I confeſs; but neceſſary to your preſervation from the moſt deſtructive courſes. What ſignifies the ſcorn or reſentment of a few hardened wretches, compared to the peace of your own minds, the heart-felt pleaſure you will give to every real friend, your comfort and happineſs in this life, and the well grounded hope of a bleſſed immortality?

2. Let me ſhortly addreſs myſelf to parents, or others who are intruſted with the education of youth. And, oh

that I could make you sensible of the importance and difficulty of your charge! There are many directions, which might be given you with respect to education in general; but I choose to confine my thoughts at present to what is suggested by the occasion and subject of this discourse. Let it therefore be your care, to preserve your children, as much as possible, from the company and conversation of profane persons, especially those who are tainted with infidelity: and who, as its natural consequence, treat the exercises of piety with contempt and scorn. To suffer this, when you can hinder it, is treating their souls in the same manner, as you would do their bodies, if you placed doses of sweetened poison in every corner of the house. You will daily perceive how children are formed by imitation, in their temper and manners: they must bear a resemblance to those from whom they receive their first impressions: but if this is the case in general, how much more must they embrace the principles, and imitate the practice of their companions in pleasure?

This caution is so necessary, that where counsel and intreaty are not sufficient to procure compliance, authority ought to be interposed. Mere authority indeed will be very ineffectual; and therefore, I must particularly recommend to you an early attention to your children's opinion and judgment: they soon form a judgment, and will give early marks of approbation and aversion of persons and characters. Do your utmost to make them esteem religion, as the greatest happiness to every person, and the most amiable part of every character. Make them sensible, from your conduct, that it is not only your sincere choice, but greatest delight. It is very fatal to them, when they are led to look upon it as a burden and constraint. Habituate them early to consider all other qualities as good for nothing, when piety is wanting; and a person of a truly Christian conversation as worthy of the highest esteem, whatever be his station or circumstances in other respects. Remember it makes a part of the character of a good man, as drawn by the psalmist David; Psalm xv. 4. "In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honoreth "them that fear the Lord." I am persuaded, that many,

who truly fear God themſelves, are inadvertently guilty of a great miſtake in this particular: they diſcover unhappily too much of their admiration or envy of the natural advantages of others, independent of their moral character. Dreſs, furniture and wealth, are looked upon as diſtinguiſhing advantages; and children are often ſuffered to indulge themſelves in mockery and deriſion; even where deformity, poverty, aukwardneſs, and things perfectly innocent in themſelves, are the only objects of their ſcorn. Intellectual abilities alſo, comprehenſion of mind, and ſprightlineſs of fancy, are commonly much the objects of eſteem; and young perſons are inſenſibly led to admire theſe natural qualities, without at all conſidering to what purpoſes they are applied. This muſt neceſſarily have a fatal effect; and therefore parents ſhould endeavor, as much as poſſible, to preſerve upon their own minds, and inſpire their children with an eſteem of true piety, and a horror and averſion at a vicious character, whatever advantage may happen to accompany it.

If due care is taken betimes in this reſpect, I am perſuaded it will, in a great meaſure, prevent the danger ariſing from the example or ſolicitation of the patrons of impiety. Their chief ſucceſs depends on their real character's lying concealed, till it is ſafe and proper to avow it. They inſtill the principles of irreligion, as a wiſe man would do the moſt ſacred truths, by little and little, as their diſciples are able to bear them, and always do it under the diſguiſe of pleaſure. There is nothing more different than the converſation and carriage of a libertine, in the preſence of thoſe of whom he ſtands in awe, and among his ſelect companions; and even theſe laſt are but gradually initiated into the concluding and horrid myſteries of profanity and blaſphemy. Young minds therefore ſhould be early formed to ſuch a taſte, as to look for piety and virtue, before they will give their approbation or affection to any human accompliſhments. Were this the caſe, they would not be ſo often betrayed by ſpecious appearances, and drawn in, by degrees, firſt, to ſuffer; then, to imitate; and, at laſt, to delight in the moſt vicious practices.

While I am giving you these directions, I cannot help observing, that you may see the great necessity of wisdom and prudence in the religious education of children. Apply yourselves to it with diligence. It is an extensive and difficult, but, at the same time, a noble, useful, delightful study. "And if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of "God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth "not."

I shall now close this discourse with a few words to professing Christians in general.

My brethren, when vice rears up its head, and appears with insolence and boldness, as it will certainly affect every good man with concern, so it is of great importance what treatment it meets with from the public. If it passes without notice, we may conclude, that corruption hath deeply infected the whole mass. If men are afraid or ashamed to express their indignation at it, we may conclude the conspiracy is formidable; and that the interest of truth and piety is greatly on the decline. There are many, who in cases of gross scandal, rather choose to keep themselves at ease, by forbearance and indulgence to the guilty, than run the hazard of provoking their resentment by an honest declaration of their real sentiments. Nor is it seldom to be observed, that the very persons who do least in their own sphere, for stemming the tide of profanity, are the first and loudest in complaining of the negligence of magistrates or pastors, in inflicting public punishments or censures.

Whilst, therefore, I am endeavoring, in some measure, to discharge my own duty, I must also put you in mind of yours. It is evidently the duty of all who profess to fear God, to abstain from the society of those who are grossly profane, without discovering any sense of penitence or sorrow. The truth is, I ought rather to make this a mark of true religion, and affirm, that all good men will do so; than inform them that they should. There must be a likeness of disposition among familiar friends. Had you that abhorrence of impiety that you ought to have, you would count the society of impious persons a stain and reproach to your own characters. Of this I am able to give a very

ſtrong, and, at the ſame time, a plain and familiar proof. Were any perſon known to be guilty of theft and diſhoneſty, or any fault that is odious and diſgraceful in the world, every one would reckon his intimate companions almoſt, if not to the ſame degree, abandoned as himſelf. The ſame thing will certainly hold as to profanity or licentiouſneſs; though indeed it carries in it a melancholy proof, that ſins againſt piety or purity are far from being held in the ſame abhorrence, as what endangers our ſubſtance or temporal intereſt. I muſt, however, here beg of you, to attend to a ſingular and very ſtrong paſſage of the epiſtle to the Romans. The apoſtle Paul cloſes his deſcription of the profane world in the following terms: Rom. ii. 32, "Who knowing the judgment of "God, (that they which commit ſuch things are worthy "of death) not only do the ſame, but have pleaſure in "them that do them." I have looked into the original, and find the words juſtly tranſlated; and you ſee, from the conſtruction of the ſentence, the apoſtle repreſents having pleaſure in ſenſual and wicked men, as implying a depravity of character ſuperior even to that of ſenſuality itſelf.

But as aſſociating with the profane is a mark of profanity, ſo every degree of countenance given to them, by perſons of entire character, is a ſenſible injury to the public. It ſerves to put honor upon vice, and in part to deliver it from that juſt reproach which ought to be the puniſhment of the guilty, and a warning to others not to tread in their ſteps. I have, on ſeveral occaſions, obſerved that the preſent period or ſtate of things, in this place and congregation, demands the greateſt concern for the public intereſt of religion. Growing in numbers, and growing, I hope, in wealth, as the effect of your own and your fathers induſtry, you are in danger of the introduction of a worldly ſpirit by the riſing generation. This every good man ought, with the utmoſt prudence and reſolution, to oppoſe; particularly by doing all in his power to preſerve the honor and reſpect due to true religion, and treating with contempt every open enemy to that important intereſt. I ſincerely wiſh you improved, and poſſeſſed of every ac-

compliſiment that is truly valuable; but beware of that falſe politeneſs, which conſiſts in little elſe than an oppoſition to religion and ſobriety. And, indeed I am afraid we ſhall not ſoon attain to any other; at leaſt, not by the help of thoſe, who as they ſet religion at defiance, ſo are equally ſtrangers to that elegance, and ſenſe of decency which diſtinguiſhes perſons of higher rank.

The late riotous meeting was without doubt the moſt audacious thing of the kind that ever was attempted in this place; and therefore calls for an open and vigorous teſtimony againſt it, by every perſon in his ſphere. Regard for the glory of God, love to the ſouls of men, and ſolicitude for the riſing generation, conſpire in requiring you to exert yourſelves in ſuch a cauſe: and ſhall I not add, compaſſion to the perſons themſelves? Their worſt enemies are thoſe who treat them with indulgence, ſo long as they continue to juſtify or to palliate their offence. Nothing ſerves to harden ſinners more, than when no notice is taken of their crimes; and they find themſelves juſt as generally, and as well received, as if they had done no evil. On the other hand, when they perceive the deep concern of others on their account, it is an excellent mean of bringing them to ſerious reflection, and inducing them to tremble at themſelves. Wherefore, my beloved hearers, let me beſeech you to preſerve your horror of ſin, notwithſtanding the boldneſs of ſinners. Do every thing in your power to reclaim the offenders. Be earneſt in your ſupplications to almighty God, that he would ſnatch them as brands from the burning, and raiſe them up as trophies of his victorious grace. But while they continue in their enmity to God, forget not, on your own account, the apoſtolic counſel; "have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful "works of darkneſs, but rather reprove them."

DEVOTEDNESS TO GOD.

A

SERMON.

PSALM CXVI. 16.

Oh Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

ACTION SERMON.

MY BRETHREN,

THERE is something so fervent and affectionate in the language of the man after God's own heart, that it is extremely proper to be adopted by us in acts of adoration, trust, or supplication to God. I am at a loss to determine, whether we ought to consider the Christian's access to God, at his holy table, chiefly under one or other of these views. I am inclined to think that it is a sort of compound or union of the whole. Veneration and worship of the eternal God, and the incarnate Redeemer, exhibited to us, and as it were brought near to us by the help of the instituted signs. Reliance and confidence in God, from the opportunity given us of laying hold of his covenant. And thankful supplication to God for his support and countenance, in the surrender of ourselves to his ser-

vice. I cannot help looking upon the words of the Pſalmiſt in this paſſage, as carrying in them a mixture of all theſe holy affections. "Oh Lord, truly I am thy ſer-"vant; I am thy ſervant, and the ſon of thine handmaid. "Thou haſt looſed my bonds: I will offer to thee the ſa-"crifice of thankſgiving, and will call upon the name of "the Lord."

This Pſalm, of which David is univerſally admitted to be the author, ſeems plainly to have been compoſed after ſome ſignal deliverance, of which the remembrance was freſh upon his mind. It was ſuch as had brought his life itſelf into the moſt imminent danger. He acknowledges in the verſe preceding the text, the peculiar and gracious care which God takes of the life of his people: "Precious "in the ſight of the Lord is the death of his ſaints;" and then makes the profeſſion of relation, gratitude, and duty, contained in the words of the text.——As they ſeem to me to be very comprehenſive, and with great propriety to expreſs what ought to be the habitual temper of a Chriſtian, and the frame of ſpirit with which a communicant ought to draw near to God at his table; I ſhall endeavor, in dependance on divine grace,

I. To open the import of the Pſalmiſt's declaration and purpoſe.

II. To apply it to you as hearers of the Goſpel in general, as well as with a view to the ſacred employment immediately before you.

Firſt, then, I propoſe to open the import of the Pſalmiſt's declaration and purpoſe in the text. This I think may be included in the following particulars, to which I intreat your ſerious attention.

1. This expreſſion of the king of Iſrael, implies a very humble ſenſe of his diſtance from, and dependance upon God, as his creature. This is the firſt view which a penitent hath of himſelf when he returns to God. It is the firſt view which a good man hath of himſelf in his approaches to or communion with God. And indeed it is what ought to be inſeparable from the exerciſe of every other pious affection. To have as it were high and ho-

norable thoughts of the majeſty and greatneſs of the living God, and a deep and awful impreſſion of the immediate and continual preſence of the heart-ſearching God. This naturally produces the greateſt ſelf-abaſement, and the moſt unfeigned ſubjection of ſpirit, before our Maker. It leads to a confeſſion of him as Lord over all, and having the moſt abſolute right not only to the obedience, but to the diſpoſal of all his creatures. I cannot help thinking this is conveyed to us in the language of the Pſalmiſt, when he ſays, "O Lord, truly I am thy ſervant." He was a prince among his ſubjects, and had many other honorable diſtinctions, both natural and acquired, among men; but he was ſenſible of his being a ſervant and ſubject of the King of kings; and the force of his expreſſion, "truly I am thy ſervant," not only ſignifies the certainty of the thing, but how deeply and ſtrongly he then felt a conviction of the truth.

Suffer me to ſay, my brethren, that there is much more in this, than many apprehend. The ſcripture ſpeaks often of the knowledge of God, of a diſcovery of the glory of God, as a thing peculiar to his people, which is very different from merely ſpeculative opinions as to his nature and perfections. It implies an awful impreſſion of his power and greatneſs, a deep ſenſe how little the creature is before him, and how entirely it is in his hand. I love that expreſſion uſed by ſeveral pious writers of the laſt age, of bowing before the ſovereignty of God. When a believer or a worſhipper hath a proper view of this; when it is brought home upon his ſpirit; it as it were baniſhes all other things, all other relations, all other perſons; and he is, to his apprehenſion, alone in the preſence of the inviſible God. And then what abaſement of ſoul is of neceſſity produced! then no language can be found ſufficient to expreſs his vileneſs and nothingneſs in his own ſight. He may be a rich man among his poor neighbors, or a great man among his numerous attendants, or a learned man among the ignorant vulgar; but alas, he is no more than ſinful duſt and aſhes before the omnipotent Jehovah. There is ſomething very magnificent in the deſcription given by the prophet Iſaiah of the majeſty of God, and the correſ-

pondent ſentiments of thoſe who ſee and feel it, in the 2d chapter of his prophecies, verſe 10, 11. "Enter into "the rock, and hide thee in the duſt, for fear of the Lord, "and for the glory of his majeſty. The loſty looks of "man ſhall be humbled, and the haughtineſs of men ſhall "be bowed down, and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted in "that day." And again verſes 19, 20, 21, 22. "And "they ſhall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the "caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory "of his majeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake terribly the "earth. In that day a man ſhall caſt his idols of ſilver, "and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for "himſelf to worſhip, to the moles and to the bats: to go "into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the rag-"gedrocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his ma-"jeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake terribly the earth. Ceaſe "ye from man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils: for where-"in is he to be accounted of?"

2. This declaration of the Pſalmiſt implies a confeſſion of his being bound by particular covenant and conſent unto God, and a repetition of the ſame by a new adherence. This, as it was certainly true with regard to him, having often dedicated himſelf to God; ſo I take it to be concluded on the reiteration of the expreſſion here, "Oh "Lord, truly I am thy ſervant, I am thy ſervant." As if he ſaid, 'Oh Lord, it is undeniable; it is impoſſible to re-'cede from it. I am thine by many ties. I am by nature 'thy ſubject and thy creature; and I have many times 'confeſſed thy right, and promiſed my own duty.' I need not mention to you, either the examples in the Pſalmiſt's writings, or the occaſions in his hiſtory, on which he ſolemnly ſurrendered himſelf to God. It is ſufficient to ſay, that it was very proper that he ſhould frequently call this to mind, and confeſs it before God, as what, though it could not make his Creator's right any ſtronger, would certainly make the guilt of his own violation of it, ſo much the greater. It was certainly alſo a repetition of thoſe engagements, and a ſolemn promiſe of continued adherence to them. There is no appearance in his language, that he either regrets or repents his ſubjection to God; on the contrary, he manifeſts his deliberate approbation of it, as his

intereſt as well as duty. What he ſays here to God, has ſomething of the ſame meaning with what he ſays elſewhere to his own ſoul. Pſal. xvi. 2. "O my ſoul, thou "haſt ſaid unto the Lord, thou art my Lord." And he afterwards expreſſes the greateſt complacency in this choice, verſes 5, 6, of the above Pſalm, "The Lord is the "portion of mine inheritance, and my cup: thou main-"taineſt my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in plea-"ſant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

I take it to be very natural for pious perſons to look back upon their former engagements to God. It is a part of the worſhip they owe to him, not only to glorify him as God, but to adhere to him as their God. It comes in with propriety as a part of confeſſion of praiſe, and of holy reſolution. It humbles the ſpirit under a ſenſe of ſin, as a breach of promiſe, as well as duty. It is matter of praiſe that we have been inclined and enabled to give ourſelves to God, according to the beautiful ſentiment of David, who gives thanks to God, that he and his people had been enabled to make ſuch free and liberal contributions to the building of the Temple 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14. "Now "therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praiſe thy glo-"rious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that "we ſhould be able to offer ſo willingly after this ſort? for "all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given "thee." It is alſo plainly a part of our new engagement which is no more than a ratification of what we have often and willingly done before.

3. This declaration of the pſalmiſt is an expreſſion of his peculiar and ſpecial relation to God, "I am thy ſer-"vant and the Son of thine handmaid." There is another paſſage of his writings, where the ſame expreſſion occurs, Pſalm lxxxvi. 16. "O turn unto me, and have mercy "upon me, give thy ſtrength unto thy ſervant, and ſave the "ſon of thine handmaid." There is ſome variation indeed among interpreters in the way of illuſtrating this phraſe. Some take it for a figurative way of affirming that he was bound in the ſtrongeſt manner to God, as thoſe children who were born, of a man ſervant, and born in his own houſe, are in the moſt abſolute manner his

property. Others take it to ſignify his being not only brought up in a viſible church of God, but in a pious family, and educated in his fear: and others would have it to ſignify ſtill more eſpecially, that the pſalmiſt's mother was an eminently pious woman. And indeed I do not think that was a circumſtance, if true, either unworthy of him, to remember, or of the ſpirit of God, to put upon record. In the New Teſtament, we find the apoſtle Paul, taking notice of a ſimilar circumſtance in the caſe of Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 5. When I call to remembrance the unfeigned "faith that is in thee, &c." Without determining preciſely in what ſenſe to take the words, it is certainly adjuſted here to ſignify ſome peculiar and intimate relation to God, which laid him under the ſtrongeſt ties of adherence and ſubjection.

As there was much beauty and propriety in the pſalmiſts mentioning this circumſtance, ſo every pious perſon ought eſpecially in the Lord's ſupper, to recollect the peculiar relations he ſtands under to God. Even as members of the viſible church we are the ſervants of God, born in his houſe, baptized in his name, favored with the light of the goſpel, bleſſed with clearneſs and fullneſs of inſtruction, animated by eminent and ſhining examples. As many as have been brought up either as children or ſervants in pious families, ſeparated from the ſolicitations, and ſheltered from the inſults of wicked men; careful inſtruction, regular government, faithful admonition and kind invitation, laid as it were a ſtrict and powerful conſtraint upon them, brought them into, and kept them in the paths of piety and truth: ought they not to remember it with humility and gratitude, nay, if by means of but one pious parent, or other relation had been brought to acquaintance with God, it ought to be remembered as laying them under peculiar ties. To all which I ſhall only add, that if by the goodneſs of a gracious God, any former means of inſtruction public or private, or ſingular diſpenſation of providence has been accompanied with power, it ought to be improved in this new ſurrender of ourſelves to God, at once to increaſe our preſent gratitude and pro-

mote our future ſtedfaſtneſs in the paths of obedience. This leads me to obſerve,

4. That the declaration of the pſalmiſt implies a ſenſe of gratitude for ſignal mercies, "Thou haſt looſed my "bonds." I think it is probable that what he had in view immediately here was, deliverance from perſonal affliction, probably a dangerous ſickneſs, threatening immediate diſſolution. But the way in which it is introduced and the uſe to which it is applied, is equally ſuited to deliverances of every kind and uſe, to all ſignal mercies which were greatly needed or highly prized. He aſcribes the honor of it to God, he puts it to his own charge as a debt due to God, and on this account propoſes a return of duty and gratitude to God. It were no difficult matter to produce examples of a ſimilar conduct in the pſalmiſt, on his being favored with remarkable deliverances in his family from the enemies of his country, from ſlander and reproach, or in unexpected honor and advancement, as was his from the ſheepfold to the kingdom of Iſrael.

Now ought not every good man, to follow the example of the Pſalmiſt in this particular, to remember and acknowledge all inſtances of ſignal mercy. There is ſcarcely any perſon, but may recollect ſeveral examples of theſe in the courſe of their lives. They may remember how earneſtly they deſired deliverance in the time of danger, what a ſenſe of gratitude was upon their minds, when the mercy was recent, and this may be profitably improved, for ſtrengthening the ties which they lie under to God their Saviour. This will have a double effect, if the deliverance was implored by the prayer of faith, and if any marks can be diſcerned, of their having obtained the ſanctified improvement of it. But above all, with what propriety may they adopt the language of the Pſalmiſt, if they have been delivered from bondage of ſpirit, as well as fear and ſolicitude as to their outward ſtate. And it frequently happens, that theſe two go together. It was almoſt always ſo with the Pſalmiſt, and is natural to expect that it will be ſo with every ſerious perſon; for affliction brings ſin to remembrance, and they not only tremble, for the iſſue of the trial under which they groan, but

apprehend the holy diſpleaſure of that God, who caſt them into the furnace, and with whom they have to do. But if the candle of the Lord again ſhineth upon them, and they are walking in the light of his countenance, they may well ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "O Lord, truly I am thy "ſervant, I am thy ſervant, and the ſon of thy hand-"maid: thou haſt looſed my bonds."

5. In the laſt place, This declaration implies a ſolemn dedication and ſurrender of himſelf to God, and his ſervice for the time to come. This is the end of the retroſpect which he takes of his character and ſtate, "I will "offer to thee the ſacrifice of thankſgiving, and will call "upon the name of the Lord." He was reſolved to live a life of gratitude to God, to take all methods of openly and publicly acknowledging him as the author of his mercies. If we would ſee further his purpoſe, we may look back to the 8, 9, 10 ver. "For thou haſt delivered my "ſoul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet "from falling." He promiſes therefore a life of obedience, and as the ſource of thankful truſt and acquieſcence in God, he ſeems by the 11th verſe, to have been diſconcerted by diſcovering the treachery of men, but every thing is rectified and made up by the goodneſs and all-ſufficiency of God.

So my brethren, ought every perſon who is this day to ſet down at the table of the Lord, after a ſerious recollection of all his paſt mercies, to devote and conſecrate himſelf unto God. Take him for your portion: place your happineſs in his favor; receive your daily bread from him as his gift; pay for every mercy the tribute of praiſe; live not upon the creature without God, but endeavor to enrich and ſweeten created comforts, by communion with God: Reſolve to ſerve him with your body and ſpirit which are his, ſerve him ſincerely, reſolving that nothing ſhall have quiet poſſeſſion of your heart, or indulgence in your life, that is contrary to his will. Serve him with zeal, eſpouſe his intereſt, plead his cauſe, and eſteem it your honor, if by your authority, by your talents, by your ſubſtance, you can promote his glory. Put your truſt in his providence. You are yet in the body, liable to all the

viciſitudes of this mortal ſtate. Be perſuaded of the infinite wiſdom, and all ſufficiency of God. Let him diſpoſe of you freely. Reſiſt exceſſive anxiety and fear, and oppoſe to all the gloomy horrors of a fruitful apprehenſion, the ſhield of faith in almighty ſtrength, which is able to bear you up ſuperior to every trial, and to every enemy. Do in every ſtate of difficulty as the prophet Iſaiah, in the name of God, invites the people of Iſrael to do on the approach of public judgment, Iſaiah xxvi, 20. "Come, my "people, enter thou into thy chambers, and ſhut thy "doors about thee: hide thy ſelf as it were for a little mo- "ment, until the indignation be overpaſt."

I proceed now in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of this ſubject.

1. Suffer me my brethren to plead with every ſinner; to plead with every hearer in this aſſembly, the right of his Maker to his ſervice. He hath made and formed you, and his viſitation preſerves your ſpirits. He only holdeth your ſoul in life, and unto him belong the iſſues from death—Of him, and to him, and through him, are all things. Have you therefore ſerved him as your maſter, and placed your happineſs on his favors. I chooſe my brethren to aſſert God's dominion over his creatures, that if it pleaſe him to accompany it with his ſpirit, it may carry conviction to many who are living in quiet and ſelf ſatisfaction, although they are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins. Many, if they are free from groſſer corruptions, are no way apprehenſive of the danger of being *without God* in the world. Ignorance of themſelves, extenuation of ſin, fooliſhly placing a merit in a few common outſide duties, and preſumptuous hopes in God's general mercy, are the deluſive grounds of the hope of ſuch perſons. Nay, ſometimes, alas for their folly! the chief thing they have to truſt to, is the ill that they have not done. I really do not ſwear ſays one, I hate drinking abominably, it is a beaſtly vice. What ſignify theſe partial juſtifications? I have known, though it is not common, I confeſs, an habitual adulterer that would not ſwear, and I could ſhew you a coveteous hard hearted wretch, grinding every day the faces of the poor, that will neither drink nor ſwear.

But are you the ſervants of God? are you devoted to his fear? believe it ſirs, there is an abſolute neceſſity of an entire change in your nature, to fit you for the kingdom of God. You are his creatures, you ought to be his ſervants, and in one ſenſe indeed his enemies are his ſervants, becauſe they are under the dominion of his Providence, and ſhall at laſt be the monuments of his vengeance. Be warned then in time, for you may reſt aſſured that no man hath hardened himſelf againſt him, and proſpered.

2. But in the next place, I muſt not omit giving warning of their danger, to ſuch as are living in open and avowed profanity. They are ſo far from being the ſervants of God, that they are his enemies, his confederated enemies, and the enemies of every thing that ſtands in a viſible relation to him. I will once more my brethren, take the liberty to denounce the judgment of God, againſt all ſuch perſons, and I am preaching the goſpel of Chriſt, while I am doing ſo, for he ſhall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire. And all profane ſwearers that ſpeak the language of hell on earth, ſhall have it as their abode for ever. All deſpiſers of the ſabbath of reſt.

THE RIGHTEOUS SCARCELY SAVED, AND THE WICKED CERTAINLY DESTROYED.

A

SERMON.

1 PETER iv. 18.

And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

ALL mankind may be divided into two great classes, the righteous and the wicked, the friends and the enemies of God, the heirs of glory and the heirs of hell. These, though mixed together on earth, and in many cases not easily to be distinguished by men, are yet essentially different in their characters, and shall at last meet with a very different fate. Of how much moment would it be for every one to see his own character and state before the final separation, when the judge shall divide them, one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats!

There are many awful tokens of divine justice and holiness in the administration of Providence, which ought to be considered by us, as preludes to the great day of retribution, when God shall render to every man, according to his works. The apostle Peter, in the verses preceding

the text, is ſpeaking of the divine judgments which were coming upon that generation, and which were in part, to fall even upon the church and people of God. From this he takes occaſion, to point out the infinitely greater danger of impenitent ſinners, who were expoſed, not only to the ſame or heavier temporal ſtrokes, but to a final and eternal deſtruction. verſe 17. "For the time is come "that judgment muſt begin at the houſe of God: and if "it firſt begin at us, what ſhall the end be of them that "obey not the goſpel of God?" Conſidering alſo that God in righteous ſeverity, ſees it neceſſary to make even his own people to paſs through the furnace, and through much tribulation, to enter into the kingdom of God, he inſtitutes the compariſon in the text, to point out the dreadful ſtate of the finally impenitent; "And if the righteous "ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly and the "ſinner appear?"

In diſcourſing further upon this ſubject, what I propoſe is,

I. To explain the import of the declaration, or ſuppoſition, in the firſt part of the text, that "the righteous "ſcarcely are ſaved."

II. To conſider the concluſion drawn from it, by the apoſtle, "where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear?"

III. I ſhall make a practical improvement of the ſubject for your inſtruction and direction.

In the firſt place then, I am to explain the import of the declaration, or ſuppoſition, in the firſt part of the text, that "the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved." There is the greater neceſſity of this, that the expreſſion is both ſtrong and ſingular. There are many paſſages indeed, that carry in them truths akin to it, and founded upon it; but the ſentiment itſelf, is almoſt peculiar to this paſſage, that "the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved." There are ſome, who ſuppoſe that the expreſſion is borrowed from, or aludes to Prov. xi. 31. "Behold, the righteous ſhall be "recompenſed in the earth: much more the wicked and "the ſinner." The meaning they give thus: Even the righteous muſt expect to meet with ſufferings and ca-

lamities on earth, much more, wicked men, under the juſt diſpleaſure of a holy God. But I think it is plain, that the apoſtle in our text, has an eye to the deciſive judgment of the laſt day; for he ſays in the preceding verſe, "What ſhall the end be of them, that obey not the "goſpel of God." It is no where ſaid in ſcripture, that wicked men ſhall be puniſhed in the preſent life, in a manner fully adequate to their guilt, much leſs that a juſt and viſible proportion, is to be obſerved between their ſufferings, and thoſe of the ſervants of God. On the contrary, they are called the men of the world; it is ſaid, they have their part and portion in this life, and their proſperity, compared with the trials and ſufferings of good men, appears to have been in every age, a ſource of temptation to the children of God.

We muſt therefore underſtand the apoſtle, as ſpeaking of the eternal ſtate, both of the righteous and the wicked, in the correſpondent parts of this paſſage. What then is the meaning of the righteous being ſcarcely ſaved? It cannot mean that there is any defect or ſtraitneſs in the mercy of God. The invitation to ſinners, in the goſpel, is not only urgent, but full, free, and infinitely gracious. It cannot mean that there is any defect in the mind or power of our Redeemer, or if the ſecurity of thoſe who put their truſt in him, were to be doubted, or their victory over all the enemies of their ſalvation, were uncertain. To affix any ſuch meaning to the words, would be to ſet them in direct oppoſition to many other paſſages of ſcripture, and to do the greateſt injury to the divine wiſdom and truth. In order therefore, to open the import of this intereſting declaration, you may obſerve the following things:

1. The righteous may be ſaid to be ſcarcely ſaved, becauſe all are juſtly liable to divine vengeance, and it is only of the free grace, and ſovereign mercy of God, that any are ſaved. This, my brethren, is a truth of the greateſt moment, repeated in almoſt every page of the ſacred oracles, but which none can either underſtand or approve, till they are effectually humbled by the ſpirit of God. It is however, the ſum and ſubſtance of the goſpel. See in what terms it is deſcribed by the apoſtle Paul, Eph. ii.

4—10. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great "love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead "in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: (by grace "ye are saved) and hath raised us up together, and made "us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That "in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches "of his grace, in his kindness toward us, through Christ "Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and "that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of "works, lest any man should boast: For we are his work-"manship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in "them." There is not a believer on earth, nor a saint in heaven, but who is ready to acknowledge, that he was by nature an enemy to God in his mind by wicked works; that he had highly provoked him, and that if God had dealt with him in strict justice, he would have been for ever banished from his presence and enjoyment. Probably many will recollect the time of their ignorance and security, and admire thepatience of God towards them, and see that they are indeed scarcely saved, since they have been brought back from the very brink of destruction. If any malefactor had been arraigned, judged and condemned to die, and after apprehending the just punishment of his crime, should be saved by an act of royal clemency, at a stake or on a scaffold, would he not consider himself as scarcely saved. But this is no more than a just image of the state and views of a pardoned sinner, and what will continue to be the views of those who have entered into rest. They are clothed with white robes, as an emblem, not of innocence, but absolution, and the song of praise which they sing, intimates the condition from which they were brought, Rev. v. 9. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to "open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast re-"deemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, "and tongue, and people, and nation;" verse 12. "Wor-"thy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, and "riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, "and blessing."

This leads me to obſerve, that as their ſalvation is of ſovereign grace in the Father's love, ſo it was purchaſed by the moſt amazing ſufferings of their Redeemer in their room. They are ſcarcely ſaved, not only from the want of merit in themſelves, but from the infinite expence and coſt laid out by him for their redemption. Such was the evil of ſin, and ſo deplorable the ſtate of the ſinner, that the wiſdom, truth, and holineſs of God, ſeemed all to demand his perdition. The whole creation could not furniſh a ſufficient ranſom; for the redemption of the ſoul was precious, and it ceaſed forever. Then the eternal Son of God, clothed with infinite mercy, and conveyed in ſovereign power, preſented himſelf as our Redeemer, ſaying, "Lo, I come," &c. O, amazing truth! Oh, unſearchable ſubject? Juſtly may we ſay, that the righteous ſcarcely are ſaved, ſince it required ſo coſtly an expiation. Let us remember in faith, what our Saviour endured in the garden and on the croſs, before he could ſay it was finiſhed; and we ſhall be conſtrained to confeſs that it was no eaſy undertaking to redeem thoſe ſouls that were forfeited to divine juſtice.

To conclude this particular, the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved, becauſe the application of this redemption to their ſouls, and their being brought to an unfeigned acceptance of it, required the almighty power and energy of the ſpirit of grace. This alſo is a part of that revealed truth, which the natural man hears with reluctance, and cannot receive. Yet it is not only plainly taught in ſcripture, but daily ratified in experience. John i. 13. "Which "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor "of the will of man, but of God." Without the power of the holy Ghoſt, the goſpel may be preached to ſinners from day to day, and from year to year, and yet they ſhall continue in their natural and miſerable ſtate.

It is the work of the ſpirit to open the blinded underſtanding, to awaken the ſecure and dozing conſcience, and to bend the ſtubborn will to the obedience of the goſpel. We are alſo plainly given to underſtand, that if a ſinner long reſiſts the motions of the Spirit, the conſequence, in the economy of providence, is frequently that

this divine agent departs from him, and ceaſes any longer to ſtrive with him. Every ſuch perſon is left to himſelf, given up to the dominion of his luſts, and the enſlaving power of habit; and ſo fills up the meaſure of his iniquities, till he is ripe for final judgment and deſtruction. Let us ſeverally conſider, that if ſuch proviſion was made by an all-wiſe God, for the recovery of ſuch of his creatures as had fallen by their iniquity, it could not be unneceſſary. And ſurely the whole of theſe views conſpire in opening the meaning and confirming the truth of what we are told in this paſſage, that the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved.

2. The righteous may be ſaid to be ſcarcely ſaved, becauſe their number is but very ſmall. There are few that be ſaved in compariſon of thoſe that periſh, and in compariſon of thoſe that ſeek and pretend to hope for ſalvation.

This, if it be a truth, is certainly pregnant with meaning, and deeply intereſting. I know there are ſome who have no great love to any thing that directly tends to diſturb the repoſe of a drowſy ſlothful ſpirit, who are fond of denying or calling in queſtion this truth. They allege that our Saviour evaded it as an improper queſtion, when propoſed to him by his diſciples. Luke xiii. 23. "Then "ſaid one unto him, Lord, are there few that be ſaved?" But truly I cannot ſee how he could have anſwered it more plainly, or indeed more properly, than in the following words, "Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate: for many, I ſay "unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able." Eſpecially if we compare them with the parallel place in Matth. vii. 13. "Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate: for wide is "the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruction, "and many there be which go in thereat."

What ſhall be the number of the redeemed at laſt, and what proportion it ſhall bear to the whole race of Adam, before the end of this ſtate of things, it is impoſſible for us to know. It is pleaſant to indulge the hope that it ſhall be very great, and that there are times yet to come, when the proſperity of the Redeemer's kingdom ſhall be glorious, and the triumphs of his grace perhaps univerſal. But when we ſpeak of the number of ſuch as ſhall be ſaved, we muſt ſpeak of it as relating to thoſe whom we now ſee,

and their characters as drawn in the oracles of truth. And surely if we pay the least regard to the marks of religion laid down in scripture, we must be sensible what multitudes are living in direct opposition to them, and that there are many who though they are called by the name of Christ, and maintain some degree of outward profession, yet they are far from being Christians indeed and in truth. Math. vii. 21. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord "Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he "that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

3. When the apostle says that the righteous scarcely are saved, it may mean that many make not only a common but an eminent profession of religion, who yet shall be found finally defective, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. It may mean, that not only the ungodly and openly profane sinners shall be rejected, but that all who seem to be righteous shall not be found so upon trial. This seems to lead us to consider the difference between the charitable, general, and uncertain judgment of man, and the strict, infallible, and decisive judgment of God. This is beautifully represented by our Saviour, in the parable of the tares of the field, Math. xiii. 24, and downwards; but you may particularly see what is said from the 28th verse. "The servants said unto him, wilt thou then "that we go and gather them up? But he said, nay, lest "while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat "with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: "and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ga-"ther ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles "to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

There is a circumstance to be particularly attended to here, that not only shall many deceive their fellow creatures by a false profession, but not a few shall more effectually and more fatally deceive themselves, saying they shall have peace though they walk after the imagination of their own hearts. There are many exhortations in scripture, to guard against deceiving ourselves; of which I shall only mention one. Gal. iv. 7. "Be not deceived; God is not "mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he "also reap." If our Saviour found it necessary to say to

the twelve whom he had chosen, "Ye know not what "manner of spirit ye are of;" much more may the same thing be said to numbers of professing Christians in these last days. There are many sins that may adhere to a religious profession, or be covered with a sacred veil, which yet are inconsistent with true religion. See what the apostle Paul says, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. "Though I speak "with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not "charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling "cymbal." And the apostle James i. 26. "If any man "among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his "tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion "is vain." It is an awful description given us by our Saviour, Math. vii. 22. "Many will say to me in that "day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? "and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name "done many wonderful works? And then will I profess "unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that "work iniquity."

I shall only add one evidence, with which experience furnishes us, that even in an eminent profession there may be at bottom no sincerity. There never was a time of trial in the church by persecution; but there were several of the most eminent in station, gifts and profession who were guilty of apostacy, a sure evidence that they were not found in the faith, and a great lesson of humiliation and caution to us. True religion bears all trials, and it is only he that endureth to the end that shall be saved. It is highly probable, that the apostle had this very thing in view, in the passage where my text lies; for in the preceding verse, he had been animating them to suffer as christians, and concludes in the following verse thus, "Wherefore let them that suffer, according to the will of "God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-"doing as unto a faithful Creator."

4. In the last place the righteous are scarcely saved, because those who are saved, shall be saved with much difficulty. That is to say, it will require the utmost exertion of their care and vigilance. They may expect a continual conflict with temptations and trials from without,

and the ſtirrings of corruptions from within. There is nothing more contrary to the ſcripture view of our chriſtian courſe, than to ſuppoſe it a ſtate of unmoleſted quiet, ſecurity and indulgence. It is repreſented to us by every image that carries in it the idea of oppoſition, activity and vigilance. It is ſtriving Math. 7. 13. "Enter ye "in at the ſtraight gate: for wide is the gate, and broad "is the way, that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be "which go in thereat:" His contending in a race, Heb. xii. 1. "Wherefore, ſeeing we alſo are compaſſed about "with ſo great a cloud of witneſſes, let us lay aſide every "weight, and the ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us, and "let us run with patience the race that is ſet before us." It is fighting, 1. Tim. vi. 12. "Fight the good fight of faith," and it is repreſented as inceſſant labor, Phil. ii. 12. "Work "out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling."

Indeed when we conſider from what, and how many quarters, we muſt expect oppoſition, this truth will appear with the fulleſt evidence. Conſider the implacable hatred of the great adverſary, the reproach and injuries of wicked men, their ſtill more pernicious example and ſolicitation, the allurements of the world, in this ſenſible ſtate, and the treachery and deceitfulneſs of our own hearts. Of the great danger of all theſe we have the greateſt reaſon to be convinced from the confeſſion and teſtimony of thoſe who have gone before us, yet over them all the believer muſt obtain the victory, and ſhall obtain it in his Redeemer's ſtrength. 1. John. v. 4 "For "whatſoever is born of God overcometh the world: and "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our "faith."

There is nothing here ſaid contrary to what the ſcripture informs us, of the peace and conſolation, that attends the practice of true religion. It is not ſaid to diſcourage the believer; but to put him on his guard, and to warn him not to miſtake the nature and foundation of that peace he is entitled to expect. It does not conſiſt in a neglect of his enemies, far leſs in a confederacy with, or ſubjection to them, but in the aſſured proſpect, and growing evidence of his victory over them. Further, the inward con-

ſolation of a Chriſtian, does not conſiſt in thinking light of ſin, by excuſing it, or juſtifying himſelf by denying it; but in unfeigned ſelf-denial, a willingneſs to ſee the evil of ſin, and taking ſhame to himſelf by confeſſing it, together with evangelical views of divine mercy in the pardon of it, and the promiſed ſtrength of divine grace to enable him to reſiſt and ſubdue it.

I proceed now to the ſecond thing propoſed, which was to conſider the inference drawn in the laſt part of the verſe, "where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinners appear?" I need ſcarcely tell you, that the form of a queſtion uſed here, is a very common figure of ſpeech to ſignify their dreadful ſituation. This juſt but very awful inference, is intended for the terror of thoſe who live in open ungodlineſs, and avowed contempt of divine mercy. Perhaps it may be proper from the context, to conſider a little the time when the wicked ſhall be expoſed to this terrible danger: and then the import of the threatening itſelf. As to the time when the difference is to appear, it may be,

1. In a time of public calamity, or any remarkable viſitation of divine ſeverity. Such a time is deſcribed, Luke xxi. 25, 26. "There ſhall be upon the earth diſtreſs "of nations, with perplexity; the ſea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking "after thoſe things which are coming on the earth; for "the powers of heaven ſhall be ſhaken." Then the conſcience of the moſt obdurate is ſometimes alarmed. I am ſenſible, and I have formerly hinted, that good men have no charter of exception from outward ſufferings. But in theſe times of general trial, the difference between them and others is very great. They have an anchor of hope in the favor of a reconciled, and in the wiſdom and providence of an omnipotent God. But the profane and ungodly, terrified by the reproaches of a guilty conſcience, are made to tremble through fear of the execution of deſerved judgment.

2. In a time of perſonal diſtreſs, and apparent danger of death. This important change is no light matter, even to the beſt. They have often no ſmall degree of ſolicitude and fear, as to the manner of going through this laſt and

deciſive conflict. But how much more fearful an aſpect muſt the king of terrors wear, to the impenitent ſinner? when the charm is diſſolved, and all his ſinful pleaſures are turned into wormwood and gall; when he ſees he muſt bid an eternal farewell to every ſenſual delight, enter into a world of ſpirits, and appear in the preſence of God. But,

3. Both theſe are only preparatory to the day of judgment. "For we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt." Then his people ſhall lift up their heads with joy, for the day of their redemption has arrived. But with what inexpreſſible confuſion ſhall the wicked then be covered? In vain ſhall they call upon the mountains and hills to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb. Now they affront his perſon, oppoſe his reign, reſiſt his ſpirit, and ſcorn his ſervants. But where ſhall they appear, and what will they do, when the "Lord Jeſus ſhall be "revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance "on them that know not God, and obey not the goſpel."

This leads me more particularly to conſider the import of the inference in the text, "If the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, "where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinners appear?" And I think it plainly carries in it three things, that from the holineſs and ſeverity of God, and the righteous ſcarcely being ſaved, we may learn the certainty, the greatneſs, and the juſtice of the puniſhment of impenitent ſinners.

1. The certainty of it. That as the threatenings are awful, the execution ſhall be inevitable. Men are exceedingly prone, from partiality to themſelves, and from the ſuggeſtions of the father of lies, to diſbelieve the threatenings as well as the promiſes of God. This was a great part of the temptation to the commiſſion of the firſt ſin, Gen. iii. 4. "And the ſerpent ſaid unto the woman, ye "ſhall not ſurely die." And the credit that was given to it at that time, has been continued by ſinners in every ſubſequent age. They are ready to preſume upon the general goodneſs of God, and to flatter themſelves that his threatenings ſhall be either wholly remitted or greatly abated. We find that ſome men of corrupt minds have even ſet themſelves to reaſon againſt the rigor of the ſcrip-

ture denunciations againſt ſin, and the eternal puniſhment of ſinners.

But how fatal the deluſion? The truth of God is an inſeparable bar to this deceitful expectation. Iſ. iii. 10, 11. "Say ye to the righteous, that it ſhall be well with "him; for they ſhall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe "unto the wicked! it ſhall be ill with him; for the re-"ward of his hands ſhall be given him." Pſ. l. 21, 22. "Theſe things haſt thou done, and I kept ſilence: thou "thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch an one as thyſelf: "but I will reprove thee, and ſet them in order before "thine eyes. Now conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt "I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Nay, not only is this aſſerted in the word of God, but the whole procedure of divine Providence ſerves to confirm it. If the ſalvation of the righteous is with difficulty obtained; if their redemption is ſo dearly purchaſed; if Chriſt muſt bleed before they can be forgiven: how ſhall the ungodly be able to ſtand in the judgment! If even the ſervants of God muſt be expoſed to ſo many ſufferings in the day of trial, what muſt be the condition of his enemies in the day of retribution? If even the ſins of the holy muſt be viſited, how ſhall the crimes of the impenitent paſs unpuniſhed? This is plainly one part of the truth contained in this paſſage; and whoever will deliberately conſider the uniform tenor of the holy ſcriptures, and compare it with the diſpenſations of divine Providence, will have reaſon to tremble at the dreadful ſtate of incorrigible ſinners, and to ſay with the apoſtle Paul, Heb. xii. 25. "See that ye refuſe not him that ſpeaketh. For if they "eſcaped not who refuſed him that ſpake on earth, much "more ſhall not we eſcape, if we turn away from him "that ſpeaketh from heaven."

2. The expreſſion in the text implies the greatneſs of the puniſhment of ſinners. It is indeed, my brethren, every where repreſented in ſcripture in ſuch terms, as ſerve to convey to us the moſt dreadful apprehenſions of its weight as well as the deepeſt conviction of its certainty. It is repreſented as the blackneſs of darkneſs forever, and as a worm that ſhall never die. But

the image moſt commonly uſed is fire, which is the moſt terrible to ſenſe, of all the elements we have any knowledge of. It is a lake that burns with fire and brimſtone for evermore. Without entering at all into the queſtion, how much is literal, and how much figurative, in theſe images, the juſt concluſion from them is, that thoſe who ſhall be the final monuments of divine vengeance, ſhall be in a ſtate ſorrowful and comfortleſs as darkneſs, painful as a gnawing worm, and dreadful as fire.

This is alſo manifeſtly founded on the reflection in the text, " if the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved :" if they ſuffer ſo much at preſent by divine permiſſion ; if they ſuffer ſo much by the perſecution of the ungodly, what a load of vengeance awaits the wicked in the day of reckoning, when he will recompenſe tribulation to the troublers of his choſen ? If there is ſo much holy ſeverity, a neceſſary account of ſin even in the preſent life, which is the time of divine forbearance, even towards the children of God, who are the objects of his everlaſting love, what ſhall be the ſtate of thoſe who have outſinned the ſeaſon of his grace, and forfeited all title to his mercy, on whom he intends at once to glorify his juſtice, and to magnify his power. Hear the words of the Holy Ghoſt 2 Theſſ. i. 9. " Who " ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the " preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

3. The expreſſion in the text, implies the juſtice of the puniſhment of ſinners. This is a circumſtance always to be taken in, for at the laſt day he ſhall judge the world in righteouſneſs by that man, whom he hath ordained. He ſhall judge the world in righteouſneſs and the people with his truth. This is a circumſtance not only for the illuſtration of the glory of God, but for the manifeſtation of the preſent truth. If the puniſhment of ſinners were not juſt, it could not be great ; if it were not known and felt by themſelves to be juſt, it would not be intollerable.

THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL ENTIRELY OF GOD.

A

SERMON.

1 CORINTHIANS iii. 5, 6, 7.

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

MY BRETHREN,

I HAVE been led to the choice of this subject, by that dispensation of providence, which, though contrary to all human probability, hath brought me to this new charge of presiding over the instruction of youth, in the liberal arts. I find also that in the course of my attendance on it, I shall have frequent opportunities of preaching the glorious gospel of the blessed God to you, of this congregation and neighborhood. Let me therefore beg your attention to the instructive passage which I have just now read, that both teachers and scholars, ministers and hearers, may preserve a just sense of their relation to one another, and

the common relation we all ſtand in to God. And particularly that in the diſcharge of our mutual duty of preaching and hearing, we may preſerve on our minds, a deep ſenſe of our dependance on ſuperior ſtrength, and may look for a bleſſing from the Father of lights, from whom alone it can poſſibly flow.

The text of itſelf and independent of its connexion, is ſo full of uſeful matter, that I am unwilling to ſpend your time by a long deduction of the particular circumſtances of the church of Corinth, which led the apoſtle to expreſs himſelf in the language contained in it. Let it ſuffice therefore to obſerve, that a ſpirit of pride and faction prevailed very much in that church, which had rent them into parties, denominated from this, or the other principal teacher who was, or had been among them. Thus in the 12th verſe of the firſt chapter, "Now this I ſay that every one "of you ſaith I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of "Cephas, and I of Chriſt," and in the verſe immediately preceding the text. "For while one ſaith I am of Paul, "and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal." Poſſibly the converts from among the Jews counted themſelves the diſciples of Peter, and held him in the higheſt eſteem, while thoſe of the Gentiles ſupported the name and credit of the apoſtle Paul, who firſt planted the chriſtian faith among the idolatrous heathens, and perhaps others who were much addicted to learning and philoſophy, admired, and extolled the eloquence of Apollos. And yet after all, perhaps the fierce and unchriſtian contentions that prevailed in that church, were not owing to their divided attachment to particular apoſtles, but to the ambitious and corrupt teachers, which were among themſelves. If this was the caſe, the apoſtle Paul only mentioned himſelf, Apollos and Cephas, by way of ſuppoſition, inſtead of naming the guilty heads of the contending parties, that the reproof being adminiſtered with ſo much prudence and delicacy, might be carried home with the greater evidence and force. This interpretation receives a good deal of countenance from what we find in chap. iv. 6. "And "theſe things brethren, I have in a figure transferred to "myſelf, and to Apollos, for your ſake; that ye might learn

" in us, not to think of men above, that which is written, " that no one of you be puffed up for one againſt another."

Such a diviſion and factious temper does infinite miſchief wherever it prevails. It proceeds from people's being much under the power of a carnal mind, and exceedingly increaſes carnality by that envy, ſtrife, and diſſimulation, which it always produces. But the chief way in which it hinders the ſucceſs of the goſpel is, by leading men into the fatal miſtake of ſeeking or expecting to find in miniſters what can only be had in God, or aſcribing to inſtruments and ſervants, what is due only to their Lord and maſter. Would you perceive the greatneſs of this ſin? It is ſacreligiouſly robbing God of his own honor and glory, in order to inveſt a weak ſinful creature with the ſacred ſpoils.

I only add one other preliminary remark. You may ſee the perfect conſiſtency and propriety of the apoſtle's conduct, according to the different circumſtances in which he was engaged. For this purpoſe we muſt compare his expreſſions, here with thoſe uſed by him when attempts were made to leſſen his character, and detract from the dignity of his office, as an apoſtle of Chriſt. On theſe occaſions he ſhews, that he knows very well what belonged to his ſtation in the church, and is ſo far from ſpeaking of himſelf in affected ſtrains of humility, that he freely vindicates his own conduct, and magnifies the honorable truſt that was committed to him by his Saviour. chap. ix. verſe 1, 2. " Am I not an apoſtle? am I not " free? have I not ſeen Jeſus Chriſt our Lord? are not " ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apoſtle to " others, yet doubtleſs I am to you: for the ſeal of mine " apoſtleſhip are ye in the Lord." Thus the apoſtle ſpeaks in vindication of his authority, when unjuſtly attacked. But when the queſtion is changed, and ſome are diſpoſed to excel him or any other, too much to the prejudice of his Lord and maſter, he changes his ſtile too, and ſpeaks in the humbleſt manner of himſelf, and any thing he had contributed or could contribute to the ſucceſs of the goſpel. As a faithful ſervant he could not endure that any ſhould put him in his maſter's place, and rejects with indigna-

tion all that falſe honor which flowed only from the miſtakes and weakneſs of his fellow chriſtians.

In this as in many other inſtances, the occaſional directions given to the different chriſtian churches, in the early ages carry the moſt important and uſeful admonitions to us who live in the latter days. From the paſſage before us, we learn that miniſters ſhould conſider themſelves, and be conſidered by their people, as entirely ſubordinate to God, and expect aſſiſtance in their labors, and ſucceſs in their endeavors, only from himſelf. What I further propoſe, in dependance on divine grace, is firſt to illuſtrate and ſupport the propoſition juſt now laid down, and then to make a practical improvement of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction.

I. Firſt then, I am to illuſtrate and ſupport this propoſition, That miniſters ought to conſider themſelves, and to be conſidered by their people, as entirely ſubordinate to God, and expect aſſiſtance in their labors, and ſucceſs in their endeavors only from himſelf. In the courſe of this illuſtration, it is my intention, at once, to point out the meaning and import of the propoſition, and to eſtabliſh its truth from ſcripture and experience. For this purpoſe I beg your attention to the following obſervations.

1. The ſucceſs of the goſpel depends wholly upon God, and to him alone muſt the glory of it be aſcribed, as it is he, who not only ſends and employs, but who furniſhes and qualifies all, whom he employs for promoting his ſervice. He not only gives the commiſſion to undertake, but he imparts the ability to diſcharge the truſt. This truth is manifeſtly included in the apoſtle's words, "Who "then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but miniſters by whom "ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man." He conſiders himſelf and others, only as miniſters, that is, as ſervants ſubject to the direction and authority of Chriſt their Lord and maſter, unto whom they are to be inſtrumental in carrying on the converſion of ſinners, and the edification and comfort of believers. This ſimilitude however of itſelf, does not fully come up to the truth the apoſtle would inculcate. A man who is but a ſervant,

and does every thing by the authority, and under the direction of his maſter, may yet have real and juſt ground, for valuing himſelf upon what he performs; in caſe, for inſtance, he is poſſeſſed of uncommon talents, and an extraordinary capacity, to do his work to the beſt advantage. On this ſuppoſition, he is a treaſure to his maſter, the ſucceſs of whoſe direction may in a great meaſure be aſcribed to the ſervant's ſkill and ability in the execution. But to exclude every pretence of this ſort, the apoſtle ſubjoins what brings the alluſion fully up to his purpoſe; "even "as the Lord gave to every man." Miniſters are not only ſervants, but their very capacity and ability to ſerve God, are received from himſelf, who divides to every man ſeverally, as he will. From this it is evident, that the glory and honor of the whole work, and the ſucceſs of every particular ſervant employed in it, is entirely owing to Chriſt, their great Lord and maſter, 1 Cor. iv. 7. "For who "maketh thee to differ from another? and what haſt thou "that thou didſt not receive! now if thou didſt receive it, "why doſt thou glory as if thou hadſt not received it?"

Let us, my brethren, conſider and dwell upon this truth a little, for it is full of inſtruction, both to miniſters and people. That we may view it with the greater clearneſs and preciſion, let me obſerve, that there are two diſtinct kinds of qualities, which are each in their place, of great importance on the work of the miniſtry. (1.) The endowments of the mind, whether original and natural, or acquired by induſtry; theſe laſt being only the former improved and perfected by education and exerciſe. (2.) Holy diſpoſitions, which are of the utmoſt importance and neceſſity, to turn the other into their proper channel, and to give them force and influence in the application. Now both theſe are equally and entirely the gift of God, the firſt being indeed in ſcripture moſt commonly, in all their extent and diverſity, called gifts; but the others are the effect of the gracious and ſanctifying influence of the Holy Ghoſt.

(1.) All the endowments of mind, which fit a man for common or ſpecial ſervice, are the gift of God. Whatever capacity or talents, whatever natural advantages of

any kind, miniſters enjoy, it is plain, that they received them from God, and depend upon him for the continuance and uſe of them. He only endows them with knowledge and comprehenſion, to underſtand his ſacred truths: He only, endows them with the talent of ſpeaking well, and enables them to communicate their knowledge to others, in an agreeable and acceptable manner, Exod. iv. 11, 12. "And the Lord ſaid unto him, Who hath made man's "mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the ſeeing, "or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, "and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou "ſhalt ſay." There is ſomething very noble, as well as inſtructive in theſe paſſages of ſcripture, which repreſent even the ſkill of the tradeſmen to be employed in adorning the viſible ſanctuary, as the gift of God, and the inſpiration of his ſpirit. Exod. xxxi. 1, 2, 3, 4. "And "the Lord ſpake unto Moſes, ſaying, ſee, I have called "by name, Bezaleel, the ſon of Uri, the ſon of Hur, of "the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the ſpirit "of God, in wiſdom, and in underſtanding, and in know-"ledge, and in all manner of workmanſhip, to deviſe "cunning works, to work in gold, and in ſilver, and in "braſs." And again, Exod. xxxvi. 1. "Then wrought "Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wiſe-hearted man, in "whom the Lord put wiſdom and underſtanding, to know "how to work all manner of work for the ſervice of the "ſanctuary, according to all that the Lord had com-"manded."

Further, as it is the inſpiration of the Almighty, that giveth underſtanding both in a general and comparative view, ſo the improvement of natural parts by acquired learning, is no leſs to be aſcribed to him. As he gives the diſpoſition and ability, ſo it is he who by the courſe of his providence furniſhes the means, and preſents the opportunity of making progreſs. Let human efforts be what they will, if God do not ſmile upon them, they will infallibly be blaſted. An all ſeeing and ſovereign God, has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of our habitation, and every perſon who will ſeriouſly reflect, may be ſenſible how all his purpoſes have

been controuled and over-ruled by the invisible direction of the great Disposer of every event, who hath pointed out the paths in which he was to walk.

(2.) Let us also remember that it is God, who endows his ministers with their brightest ornaments, viz. holy and gracious dispositions which serve to turn their other talents into the proper channel, and to give them force and influence in the application. I am sensible, my brethren, that gifts may be considered as more assistant to the being of the ministry, than even grace itself. We justly renounce the popish doctrine, that the efficacy of the sacraments, or other ordinances, depends upon the intention or inward state of the administrator. In opposition to this the Assembly's Shorter Catechism says justly, "the sacra-" ments, (and it is equally true of every other ordinance) " becomes effectual to salvation, not from any virtue in them; " nor in him that doth administer them, but only by the " blessing of Christ, and the working of his spirit in them, " that by faith receive them." A hypocrite cannot be a faithful, but he may be in some degree a successful minister. I am persuaded there are not a few now in heaven, who were converted and edified by the ministry of those who have taken up their abode in the place of torment: an awful reflection this indeed, to those who are intrusted with the office of the ministry. It brings to my mind a saying of an eminent and pious writer, ministers are in as great danger of deceiving themselves as others, and in some respects greater, for they may be apt to mistake their readiness in thinking and speaking of holy things, and those gifts which God bestows upon them, for the benefit of his chosen, for the fruit and evidence of gracious dispositions in their own hearts.

But notwithstanding all this, it is beyond all controversy, that one of the most essential qualifications of a good minister is, that he be a good man. It is a very difficult, as well as it is a very dreadful thing, to preach an unknown Saviour. But where the love of Christ dwells and reigns in the heart, it gives such attachment to his cause, so much love to his people, so much clearness and comprehension in understanding his truths, so great wil-

lingneſs, or rather deſire to communicate them, as cannot fail to have the greateſt influence on a miniſter's diligence, and at the ſame time gives reaſon to hope that he will ſpeak from faith to faith. Thus the apoſtle expreſſes himſelf, 2. Cor. iv. 13. "We having the ſame ſpirit "of faith, according as it is written, I have believed, "therefore have I ſpoken: we alſo believe, and therefore "ſpeak."

Now to whom is a miniſter indebted for his holy diſpoſitions? Who implanted in him that love to Chriſt, which inſpires him with zeal and fidelity in his ſervice? Take the anſwer in the words of the apoſtle, 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6. "For we preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus "our Lord; and ourſelves, your ſervants for Jeſus' ſake. "For God who commanded the light to ſhine out of "darkneſs, hath ſhined our hearts, to give the light of the "knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt." It was the power of God that brought him again from the dead, and it is by the ſpirit of God dwelling in him, that he is daily ſanctified and enabled to adorn the doctrine of God, his Saviour, in all things. So that the fire of his miniſtrations, and the light of his example, and the joint influence of both, are to be ultimately referred, and will by him be moſt willingly and thankfully attributed to the power and grace of God, his Redeemer, of whoſe fulneſs we all have received, and grace for grace.

2. But in the ſecond place, the ſucceſs of the goſpel depends entirely on God, as it is he who gives efficacy to the inſtructions, even of the moſt eminent and beſt qualified miniſters, by the immediate ſupernatural operation of his ſpirit and grace. Let us ſuppoſe a miniſter endued with the fineſt natural parts, and theſe improved and cultivated, by all the advantages of human learning. Let him have the moſt acute and penetrating genius, the moſt lively imagination, the moſt ſolid judgment, the moſt charming and perſuaſive eloquence; in fine let him have what alone is of more value than all theſe, an eminently pious and devout heart. With ſo many advantages he ſhall not be able to make one ſincere convert, unleſs almighty God be pleaſed to open the way by his divine

grace into the hearts and conſciences of the ſinner. It is not then merely by furniſhing the proper means and by the diſpoſition of his providence, giving them an opportunity of exerting their influence, that God promotes the ſucceſs of the goſpel, but by an immediate and powerful agency, diſtinct from, and ſuperior to every ſecond cauſe.

I have endeavored to expreſs this with the greateſt fulneſs, and the greateſt clearneſs, as a truth of the utmoſt importance. While we believe the uſe and neceſſity of means and ſecond cauſes, we ought never to ſeparate them from, or forget their ſubordination to God. There can hardly be a nobler illuſtration of this truth, than the apoſtle has given us in the text, by a natural ſimilitude. "I "have planted," ſays he, "Apollos watered, but God "gave the increaſe." His expreſſions are taken from huſbandry, or gardening, which is a particular branch of it. By an alluſion to theſe arts, he explains his ſubject in a manner level to the capacity of every thinking perſon. The huſbandman or gardener may manure, dig up and mellow the ſoil; he may ſow his ſeed, and dreſs his field with the greateſt diligence and care: but what a little way has he gone, or rather indeed he hath not ſo much as begun the great proceſs of growth and vegetation, that daily miracle, may I not call it, before our eyes. How many things muſt neceſſarily concur, which are beyond the reach of his power? the enlivening heat of the ſun, the refreſhing dews and rain from the bottles of heaven, are wholly under the direction and diſpoſal of the omnipotent Jehovah. Cannot he, when he will, make the heavens over your heads as braſs, and the earth under your feet as iron? Nay, not only ſo, but the power of growing in the ſeed, by ſtriking out its roots, and opening its bud, and the natural diſpoſition in the earth to nouriſh it, are derived not from any virtue inherent in the things themſelves, but only from that almighty word, "Let the earth "bring forth every tree bearing fruit, and every herb "bearing ſeed after its kind." Juſt ſo in that ſpiritual huſbandry, of which the apoſtle is ſpeaking, miniſters may ſow the good ſeed of the word of God, but it is his own prerogative to give it a regenerating and ſanctifying

efficacy, and make it productive of faith in the heart, and good works in the life. Ministers may continue to water the seed already sown, with suitable instructions and exhortations, and the diligent use of all those means which God hath appointed for the establishment and growth of believers: but it is only the influence of his own spirit that makes these means productive of the desired effect. Therefore the apostle concludes, in language drawn from the similitude, "So then neither is he that planteth "any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giv- "eth the increase."

This important truth, my brethren, is capable of a very full and clear proof from the sacred oracles. Every thing we find recorded there, concerning the mission of the prophets, and the success of their message, carries this truth as it were in its bosom. Nay, the great prophet of the church gives us this very view of his own ministry as the Son of man. John vi. 44, 45, "No man can come to "me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him: "and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in "the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. "Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned "of the Father, cometh unto me." You see that, to the commission which our Lord gives to his apostles, is annexed a promise of his presence and power to accompany their ministrations. Math. xxviii. 19, 20. "Go ye there- "fore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have "commanded you: and lo I am with you alway, even to "the end of the world. Amen."

But instead of multiplying passages of scripture, I shall direct you to one, which will set this part of my argument in the clearest light. It is that passage which gives an account of the conversion of Lydia, recorded Acts xvi. 14. "And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, "of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard "us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to "the things that were spoken of Paul." Now if we attend to the circumstances of this conversion, we shall find

that if any thing could have been effectually done without the direct and immediate concurrence of the grace of God, it might have been expected here. The case was every way promising. The hearer was one who had renounced idolatry, and embraced the worship of the true God. She was, it is not improbable, a devout woman, so far as her knowledge reached; and wanted only to be instructed in the faith of Christ. Here was for a preacher the great apostle of the Gentiles. I need say no more to shew how well qualified he was to do his part; and yet we find that even in this most favorable case, the immediate concurrence of divine grace was necessary to complete the work. The Lord must by his own good Spirit, open the heart of Lydia, else even the apostle Paul, with all his divine accomplishments, and a heart glowing with the warmest zeal for the glory of Christ, and the salvation of souls, will be but an unsuccessful preacher.

I need not make use of any separate arguments to convince you, that this holds equally true of the growth and comfort of believers, as of the conversion of sinners. Whether ministers are employed in planting or watering, the instrument is nothing: success flows only from God. Let me therefore request and beseech you to hear and adore the striking truth, a Paul or Apollos in the pulpit will be altogether unsuccessful without the almighty power and grace of God. The most clear and distinct illustration of divine truths, without inward and spiritual illumination, will leave the hearer in ignorance, or lead him into error. The most awful denunciations of a son of thunder, without divine power, will leave the sinner hardened, or even increase the searedness of conscience. The most melting and tender application to the affections, without divine energy, will be treated with contempt and scorn. In one word, the most lively administration of ordinances, without the blessing from above, will be but in the language of the prophet, as a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts.

My brethren you may not only be convinced of this truth, because it is recorded in the word of God, but may see it daily exemplified in every part of the visible church.

You may see the same ordinances acceptable, delightful, and profitable to some; deserted, despised and resisted by others. Under the very same administration, you may see some effectually persuaded to turn to the living God, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the holy Ghost, and daily multiplied: some on the other hand caring for none of these things, but sleeping in security, nay some whose corruptions are irritated, swelling with rage, contradicting and blaspheming, all which is well described by the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. "For we are unto God "a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in "them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death "unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life; "and who is sufficient for these things?"

3. The third and last observation I am to make for the illustration of this truth is, that success in the gospel depends wholly upon God, as he exercises much of his own sovereignty in the manner of bestowing it. He takes care if I may speak so, to shew that it is from himself by the measure in which he proportions the success to the nature and sufficiency of the means he sees proper to employ. All is from God, as you have already heard because the disposing and commissioning his ministers is originally his own work—again, because however well qualified they may be, his own almighty agency is necessary to give them success. But when there is a regular proportion always observed, between the means and the end, men are ready to overlook, or forget the great and first cause of all. For this reason he sees it often meet to manifest his sovereignty, in order to command our attention, by working without means, or by the weakest means, or even contrary to means, and blasting the effect of those that were most excellent and promising in human judgment. Just as the beautiful and regular order of the natural world, the mutual dependance of one part upon, and its subserviency to another, is a proof of the wisdom and omnipotence of the Creator. Yet he sees it necessary sometimes to interpose, in an extraordinary way, and to controul the course of nature, to shew that it is absolutely at his command.

Remember, however, my brethren, that in carrying on the work of the goſpel, God uſually proportions the ſucceſs to the propriety and ſufficiency of the means. When he has much work to do, he commonly raiſes up ſome perſons eminently qualified; he draws from his quiver ſome poliſhed ſhafts, to pierce the ranks of oppoſing hoſts. Yet he often preſents to our view ſuch circumſtances as ſerve to ſhow the dependance of all means upon himſelf. When the goſpel was firſt preached, the apoſtles were indeed fully fitted and furniſhed for their work; but it was by a miracle. They were originally poor illiterate fiſhermen, quite unequal in themſelves to the aſtoniſhing undertaking, of producing a revolution in the ſtate of religion, and the ſentiments of mankind over the whole earth. Such perſons ſeem to have been employed for this wiſe purpoſe, "that our faith might not ſtand in the wiſdom of man, "but in the power of God." I have often conſidered this matter with a mixture of reverence and admiration.

That proper reſpect might ſtill be had to the qualifications of miniſters, and that none might be juſtified in pouring contempt on human ſcience, the apoſtle Paul, a man of eminent learning and ability, was the moſt active, uſeful and ſucceſsful of all the apoſtles; and one third part at leaſt, of the whole canon of the New Teſtament, was written by him. At the ſame time there were ſuch circumſtances in his calling and converſion, as made him one of the moſt illuſtrious monuments of the ſovereignty and riches of divine grace, that any age has produced.

In the ſame manner, we ſee every day the cleareſt proofs of the power, wiſdom, and ſovereignty of God. We ſee that he many times gives extraordinary and ſenſible aſſiſtance to thoſe whom he employs in his own work. So that they both perceive and confeſs that it is not they, but the grace of God, that is with them. Sometimes thoſe of very moderate, or even of the weakeſt natural abilities, have an unction from the holy one, and by their piety and diligence become workmen, that need not be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. This may be conſidered as an accompliſhment of what Iſaiah ſays of himſelf, Iſaiah l. 4. "And the Lord God, hath given me

" the tongue of the learned, that I ſhould know how to " ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him that is weary." See alſo the expreſſion of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxv. 14. " The ſe- " cret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he " will ſhew them is covenant." Our Lord promiſes to his diſciples extraordinary aſſiſtance, in time of extraordinary trials and ſuffering, Luke xxi. 14. 15. " Settle it there- " fore in your hearts, not to meditate before, what ye ſhall " anſwer. For I will give you a mouth and wiſdom, which " all your adverſaries ſhall not be able to gainſay, nor re- " ſiſt." And to name one more paſſage, it is propheſied by Iſaiah of the goſpel times, chapter xxxii. 4. " The " heart alſo of the raſh ſhall underſtand knowledge, and the " tongue of the ſtammerers ſhall be ready to ſpeak plain- " ly."

In a former part of this diſcourſe, I have admitted that gifts may be conſidered as more neceſſary to the being of the miniſtry, than even grace itſelf. Yet certainly true religion in the heart, is of far greater importance to the ſucceſs and efficacy of the miniſtry, than eminence or gifts. It ſeems often the very purpoſe of divine providence, to pour contempt upon unſanctified talents. The humble paſtor of meaner rank, who loves his maſter, his work, and his people, ſhall often have many ſeals of his miniſtry, while the perſon of ſuperior parts is urged by ambitious views into the unprofitable paths of worldly honors, or inſtigated by unmortified paſſion, to mar the ſucceſs of his miniſtry, by launching out into the tempeſtuous ocean of political conteſt and faction. But beſides the unfruitfulneſs of unſanctified talents, there are alſo many proofs of the ſovereignty of God, in refuſing his bleſſing and making the beſt miniſters in a great meaſure unprofitable to a people, in righteous judgment for their paſt ſins. Even Iſaiah could ſay, chap. liii. 1. " Who hath believed " our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord reveal- " ed?" Our bleſſed Lord himſelf upbraided many of the cities where his mighty works were done, becauſe of their unbelief and indeed upon any of his hearers his miniſtry, inſtead of a ſaving, had a hardening effect, John iii. 19. " And this is the condemnation, that light is come into

" the world, and men loved darkneſs rather than light, " becauſe their deeds were evil. The ſame thing is elſe-where reſolved into the lively and righteous judgment of God. John xii. 39, 40. " Therefore they could not be-" lieve, becauſe that Eſaias ſaid again, he hath blinded " their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they ſhould " not ſee with their eyes, nor underſtand with their heart, " and be converted, and I ſhould heal them."

I proceed now to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And in the

Firſt place, a deep and lively impreſſion of the truth I have endeavored to illuſtrate and ſupport, will be to thoſe who preach the goſpel an excellent preſervation from many temptations. It will preſerve them from truſting in themſelves, it will keep them ſtill looking upward, and engage them to maintain a continual intercourſe with the Father of lights, and the author of every good and perfect gift. It will alſo, particularly be an excellent mean of preſerving them from the dangerous extremes of oſtentation and ſloth. Oh, how unbecoming a miniſter, is a vain-glorious diſplay of human art, burning incenſe to his own vanity, and preaching himſelf, when he is called to preach Chriſt Jeſus the Lord. It is no wonder that God ſhould in his providence, pour diſgrace and diſappointment on that miniſtry, that is carried on in ſuch a manner, as to aim more at promoting the credit of the ſervant, than the honor of the maſter. On the other hand, with what countenance can they look up to God for a bleſſing, who have been at no pains to qualify themſelves for his ſervice. As oſtentation provokes the divine jealouſy, ſo negligence, is diſobedience, preſumption, and preciſely what the ſcripture calls tempting God. I would never deſire to be conſidered, as one who would encourage men, to ruſh into a pulpit unprepared, and diſgrace their honorable calling, by rude, undigeſted, diſorderly effuſions, or ſuch mean, ſlovenly, indecent language, as lays the hearers under the ſtrongeſt temptation, to treat it with an inſolence of indignation and contempt. Let me commend this, to the attention of ſuch young perſons, as may have an eye to the ſacred office. My dear fellow ſtudents,

how happy they, who can unite together, the ſimplicity of the goſpel, and the dignity of the pulpit. Who are on the one hand, not aſhamed of the croſs, and the ignominy that attends it; and on the other, as devoted ſervants, are reſolved to comply with the counſel given by the apoſtle Paul to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. "Meditate upon "theſe things, give thyſelf wholly to them; that thy pro- "fiting may appear unto all. Take heed unto thyſelf, and "unto thy doctrine; continue in them; for in doing "this, thou ſhalt both ſave thyſelf, and them that hear "thee."

2. A deep impreſſion of the truth, I have endeavored to illuſtrate, will be an excellent preſervative to the hearers of the goſpel, from many temptations, which often render their attendance on ordinances, as fruitleſs or pernicious. It will purify their views and motives, in attending on ordinances. It will deliver them from a ſinful and unreaſonable attachment to men, and carry them more immediately into the preſence of the living God: it will ſave them from that giddy, unſettled diſpoſition, of running with unbounded curioſity, from one to another, not that they may be built up in holineſs and comfort, but that their imagination and fancy may be gratified. It will preſerve them from hearing the goſpel, merely as critics, in order to paſs their judgment on the ſoundneſs or ability of their teachers, which, with whatever pride or ſelf-ſufficiency it may be done, is as empty and unprofitable a manner of hearing, as any that can be named. It will ſettle their eſteem of, and attachment to their paſtors, upon the beſt, and moſt immoveable foundation. They will then love them for their work's ſake, they will love them for their maſter's ſake, they will love them for their own ſoul's ſake, and for their ſubſerviency to their daily edification. It will carry them to the throne of grace, and incline them to make continual and fervent ſupplication to God, for his aſſiſtance and countenance to his miniſters, in his own work; and this will bring them to his houſe, in the beſt and happieſt temper for hearing with profit: in one word, it will make them, in a great meaſure, loſe view of the creature, and hear the goſpel,

not " as the word of man, but as it is indeed, and in truth, " the word of God."

3. Let me intreat the prayers of this congregation, for the miniſters of the goſpel in general, and for us, who miniſter among you in holy things, that we may be abundantly qualified, for the diſcharge of our important truſt in all its parts. The apoſtle Paul, though extraordinarily called, though ſingularly qualified, and eminently aſſiſted, never fails to aſk the prayers and interceſſion of the faithful, in his behalf, Eph. vi. 19. " And " for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may " open my mouth boldly, to make known the myſtery of " the goſpel." After this approved example, I hope you will forgive me, if I put in a particular claim in my own behalf, for your intereſt at the throne of grace. I make no merit at all, of having left country, and kindred, and connections of the deareſt kind, in order to ſerve the intereſt of the church of Chriſt, in this part of the globe: for I conſider with pleaſure, the oneneſs of his body, and the extent of the catholic church, that there ſhall come from the eaſt, and from the weſt, and from the north, and from the ſouth, and ſet down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their father. Could we but think as we ought, of the great removal, which we are making from time to time, into an eternal ſtate; the removal of our bodies, and the change of our ſcene of ſervice from Europe to America, would appear altogether unworthy of notice. But when I conſider the reſpect and affection, ſo much above my deſert, that have been ſhewn to me, ſince my arrival in this place, and the teſtimonies of joy and ſatisfaction, which have been given by all ranks, I am filled with the greateſt concern: I ſay I am filled with the greateſt concern, becauſe it plainly implies an expectation of duty and ſervice from me, which I fear I ſhall be ill able to perform. Let me therefore, on ſo juſt a foundation, not ſolicit only, but demand an intereſt in your prayers. Pray that an all-ſufficient God, may give ſtrength from above, and may pour down his bleſſing on the public inſtitution in this place, which upon the beſt information, I think I may ſay has been founded in faith;

and therefore, why ſhould not we continue to ſerve it in hope. Pray that ſucceſs may attend the miniſtry of the goſpel in this place; and that if it pleaſe God, the eſteem and affection ſhewn to me, by all to whom I ſtand now related, may not be leſs than it is, for I have not the leaſt reaſon to deſire, nor indeed the courage to hope, that it can poſſibly be greater. Once more, pray that my beloved charge, whom I left in Scotland, and will never forget, may, by the ſpecial conduct of divine providence, be ſupplied with a faithful paſtor, who may feed them with knowledge and underſtanding.

4. In the laſt place, ſuffer me to conclude, by addreſſing a few words to thoſe in this aſſembly, who are, or who have reaſon to ſuſpect themſelves to be in a ſtate of diſtance from God. I know that he himſelf only can change your hearts. Yet he hath given it in charge to his miniſters, that you ſhould receive warning. And be aſſured, that if you deſpiſe the meſſage, if you trample upon the divine mercy, and reſiſt the Spirit of God, when pleading with you in his word, or ſtriving and bearing witneſs againſt you in your conſciences; your everlaſting perdition will lie entirely at your own door. God will be juſt when he ſpeaketh, and clear when he judgeth. Conſider, I beſeech you, that there is certainly, to all of us here preſent, one thing that is needful. It ſignifies very little, whether you paſs the little uncertain time that you ſhall yet be in the body, in abundance or in penury, in honor or in ſhame, compared to what ſhall become of you forever. Lay theſe things to heart, then, in this day of your merciful viſitation. There is but one way to eſcape: "Believe in the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that be-"lieving you may have life, through his name."

THE YOKE OF CHRIST.

A

SERMON.

MATTHEW xi. 30.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

A CLEAR view of divine truth is of the utmoſt moment, both to the holineſs and comfort of the children of God. They are ſanctified by the truth. It is no leſs neceſſary, by manifeſtation of the truth, to turn ſinners from the error of their ways: for the word of God is quick and powerful. While we keep theſe things in view, we ought alſo to remember, that the truths of God are injured, not only by oppoſition, but perverſion. We are aſſured that thoſe who are unlearned and unſtable, wreſt this good word of God to their own deſtruction. If this is the caſe, it follows naturally, that as the bait is moſt dangerous, when the hook is moſt effectually concealed, ſo falſhood will be moſt apt to inſinuate itſelf, when it wears the habit, and has the greateſt reſemblance to real truth.

The reaſon of my uſing this introduction to what ſhall be offered on the text now read, is, that it is one of the paſſages moſt frequently, and moſt artfully perverted, or moſt unhappily miſapplied. It contains

a moſt important and ſalutary truth, if taken in its proper meaning, and according to the analogy of faith. But as it is wreſted and perverted by men of corrupt minds, it is often made to convey a ſtupifying and dangerous poiſon. What more important, than to deſtroy the unjuſt accuſations of the father of lies, as if religion were a heavy and inſupportable burden? But if, on the other hand, the ſame thing is made uſe of to ſow pillows for all armholes, and ſing the ſinner aſleep in ſecurity, it is equally deſtructive. Therefore, in diſcourſing of this ſubject, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, I will endeavor,

I. To ſhow you what you are not to ſuppoſe, implied in this declaration of our Lord, "My yoke is eaſy, "and my burden light."

II. What is its true and proper meaning, and

III. In the laſt place, to apply the ſubject.

Firſt, then, I am to ſhow you what you are not to ſuppoſe implied in this declaration of our Lord, "My yoke "is eaſy, and my burden light." On this, I beſeech you to attend to the following obſervations.

1. When our Saviour ſays, "My yoke is eaſy, and "my burden light," you are not to ſuppoſe that he has narrowed the extent, or weakened the obligation of the law of God. There are ſome who ſpeak in ſuch terms, as if they thought that Chriſt had granted ſome licenſe and indulgence to human corruption; that he had abated the ſeverity of the law, and would not be ſo highly offended by the tranſgreſſion of it. Becauſe we are taught that he hath redeemed us from the curſe of the law, or the rigor of its ſanction as a covenant of works, they ſpeak as if they thought, or at leaſt ſo as to lead others to think, that he hath made void the obligation of it, as a rule of duty. But the law of God is perfect, eternal, and unchangeable. It is a tranſcript of his own nature, which he will not, or which, I ſpeak it with reverence, he cannot diſpenſe with. The ſcripture expreſsly ſays, that he cannot deny himſelf.

Now our bleſſed Lord himſelf has told us upon this ſubject, Math. v. 17, 18. "Think not that I am come to de-

" ſtroy the law or the prophets : I am not come to deſtroy, " but to fulfil. For verily I ſay unto you, till heaven " and earth paſs, one jot or one tittle ſhall in no wiſe " paſs from the law, till all be fulfilled." Agreeably to this, he hath been ſo far from narrowing the extent of the law, that he hath aſſerted its honor, vindicated it from the falſe gloſſes and looſe interpretation of the Scribes and Phariſees; and pointed out its ſpirituality and influence upon the conſcience and heart. See ſeveral inſtances of this in the above cited chapter, particularly verſes 21, 22, and 27, 28. " Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old time, " Thou ſhalt not kill : and, whoſoever ſhall kill, ſhall be " in danger of the judgment: But I ſay unto you, that " whoſoever is angry with his brother without a cauſe, ſhall " be in danger of the judgment ; and whoſoever ſhall ſay " to his brother, Raca, ſhall be in danger of the council : " but whoſoever ſhall ſay, thou fool, ſhall be in danger of " hell-fire. Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old " time, Thou ſhalt not commit adultery : but I ſay unto " you, that whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, " hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." How diſtant is this from relaxation, or from modifying and accommodating the law to the corruptions of men ! And as to the obligation of the law, nothing is more clear, than that our Saviour has not taken from, but added to it in many ways. He has added to it by the clearneſs of the diſcovery which he hath made of the divine nature and will ; by the moſt glorious diſplay of divine mercy through him ; and as a juſt and neceſſary conſequence, by the awful thunderings which he hath denounced againſt thoſe who ſhall continue to deſpiſe the grace of the goſpel. Heb. ii. 2, 3. " For if the word ſpoken by angels was ſted- " faſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received " a juſt recompence of reward ; how ſhall we eſcape if we " neglect ſo great ſalvation ; which at the firſt began to be " ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by " them that heard him." And the ſame epiſtle, ch. x. verſes 26, 27, 28, 29, " For if we ſin wilfully after that " we have received the knowledge of the truth, there re- " maineth no more ſacrifice for ſins, but a certain fearful

" looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which " ſhall devour the adverſaries. He that deſpiſed Moſes' " law, died without mercy under two or three witneſſes: " of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be " thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of " God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, " wherewith he was ſanctified an unholy thing, and hath " done deſpite unto the Spirit of grace?"

2. When our Saviour ſays, " my yoke is eaſy, and " my burden is light," you are not to ſuppoſe he means to ſay that real, and acceptable obedience to the law of God, is an eaſy thing to men, as they are in themſelves, or in a ſinful and unrenewed ſtate. Oh ſay ſome the goſpel is a humane and gentle diſpenſation, the ſame does not bear hard upon human weakneſs. If we ſhould make him to ſay this my brethren, we ſhould make him to ſpeak in direct oppoſition, to many other paſſages of ſcripture, as well as to daily experience, and the nature and reaſon of the thing. Men may if they pleaſe, create to themſelves an image of religion, that ſhall be quite gentle and pliant, that ſhall have nothing in it offenſive to corrupt nature, or at any time oppoſed to the manners of faſhionable life; but nothing can be more diſtant from New Teſtament truth. There we are told that Rom. viii. 7, 8. " Be- " cauſe the carnal mind is enmity againſt God; for it is " not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. " So then they that are in the fleſh, cannot pleaſe God." There we are told, that men are by nature dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, that their recovery is the work of omnipotence, even *the mighty power of God*, and that none can bring a clean thing, out of an unclean, but God alone. But why ſhould we multiply paſſages of ſcripture, to this purpoſe, when it is manifeſt from the nature of the thing and daily experience. If it were eaſy in this ſenſe to put on Chriſt's yoke, it would alſo be common. Is not the prevalence of wickedneſs a proof to the contrary? Can any thing be more oppoſite than ſin and holineſs? None. Not even light and darkneſs. Can any man then ſerve two maſters? Is it an eaſy thing to love ſin, and practice holineſs. Do we ſee it is ſo in any in-

ſtance? Do we reckon it is eaſy for the drunkard to deny his appetite, when he ſees the liquor giving its colour in the cup, and moving itſelf aright? Is it eaſy for the malicious perſon, to govern his tongue, or the covetous man to open his heart? The truth is, it is a direct contradiction, for the law of the Lord ſearches, and chiefly requires the obedience of the heart; and therefore to ſuppoſe, or imagine that the generality of men, who are under the dominion of ſin, may notwithſtanding keep the commandments of God, is an abſurdity which we would not be guilty of, in any other ſubject. Either ſays our Saviour, "make the tree good and his fruit good;" &c. "Can a fountain ſend out at the ſame place, ſweet "water and bitter?"

3. When our Saviour ſays "my yoke is eaſy, and "my burden is light." You are not to ſuppoſe, that it is an eaſy or trifling thing, or what the ſinner may do at any time, by his own ſtrength to turn from ſin to God. Nothing can be more pernicious or a more ſtupifying doſe, to a poor careleſs ſinner, than to make him ſuppoſe that he may eaſily at any time, repent when neceſſity ſhall urge him to it. The whole ſyſtem of divine truth ſtands in direct oppoſition to this error. There our condition by nature is conſidered as not only miſerable, but helpleſs. It is divine power alone that can affect the change, John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except "the Father, which hath ſent me, draw him: and I will "raiſe him up at the laſt day." Pſal. cx. 3. Thy people "ſhall be willing in the day of thy power." The greatneſs of the change neceſſary to ſalvation demonſtrates the ſame thing, John iii. 3. "Verily, verily I ſay unto thee, "Except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom "of God." The multitudes that periſh is a further proof. "Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate," &c. To this may be added the danger of delay, and the hardening power of habit as frequently mentioned in ſcripture, Eccles. xii. 1. "Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth, "while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, "when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them." "Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the Leopard his

" ſpots; then may ye alſo, who are accuſtomed to do evil, " learn to do well." To crown the whole, there are inſtances in which the day of God's patience, and forbearance is cloſed, and the ſinners eyes ſhall not be opened on his danger, Luke xix. 41, 42. " And when he was come " near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If " thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, " the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they " are hid from thine eyes." 2 Theſſ. ii. 11. " For this " cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they " ſhould believe a lie."

4. When Chriſt ſays " my yoke is eaſy, and my burden " is light," we are not to ſuppoſe that even the children of God ſhall meet with no difficulties in their way. It ſeems to be the miſtake of ſome perſons to think that ſo ſoon as they have truly embraced the goſpel, and obtained peace with God, the conflict is over, they ſhall have an eaſy and ſlothful aſſurance, without oppoſition either from affliction or temptation. But this is quite contrary to what the ſcripture teaches to expect. It teaches us to lay our account with oppoſition, from every quarter injury from without and even treachery from within. The life of a chriſtian muſt be a life of vigilance and prayer. Outward peace, ill founded peace, a ſecure unfaithful conſcience, is what we have the greateſt reaſon to dread. Theſe are hard ſayings in the goſpel, which even the children of God find it difficult to receive. We are expoſed to continual temptation from the world and from worldly men, and to frequent trials both as we are men and chriſtians, Heb. xii. 5. " And ye have forgotten the exhortation, " which ſpeaketh unto you as unto children, my ſon, de- " ſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint " when thou art rebuked of him:" In the chriſtian warfare there is no truce. It is only he that ſhall endure to the end that ſhall be ſaved—The laſt enemy that ſhall be deſtroyed, is death.

Having thus rejected theſe falſe and miſtaken apprehenſions ſometimes ſuggeſted by this paſſage of ſcripture, and greatly encouraged by ſmooth and mollifying teachers, it remains, that I ſhould proceed to point out the true and pro-

per meaning of it, and what we are to underſtand when the Redeemer invites ſinners to come to him, by ſaying "my yoke is eaſy and my burden is light." And becauſe there are many things pertaining to this ſubject, that throw light upon each other, I ſhall endeavor to take in the whole compaſs of it, making however the illuſtration of each particular very ſhort.

1. The yoke of Chriſt may be ſaid to be eaſy and his burden light, becauſe his right to command is undeniable, the authority with which he is inveſted, is complete and full. I have placed this firſt becauſe it lies at the foundation of all religion, and is nothing elſe but the ſupreme authority and abſolute dominion of Jehovah. We all naturally think it hard to ſubmit to uſurped authority, or unjuſt dominion, but when the title to command is clear, obedience immediately appears to be reaſonable and neceſſary, and becomes our unfeigned choice, or the deſire of the heart. Thus, nothing can be more clear than the right of our Maker to the obedience and ſubmiſſion of all his creatures. It is the ſenſe of this carried home upon the conſcience that gives the firſt riſe to conviction of ſin. A diſcovery of the power and majeſty of the living God, lays the creature in the duſt, and produces ſubjection. But when to this is added, that he is Lord and proprietor of all; that all things were made by him, and for him, then ſin appears in the light of injuſtice and rebellion, and obedience, abſolute and unconditional is felt to be his due. Believe it my brethren, when the revolted creature returns to his allegiance; when the convinced ſinner ſees the guilt of his rebellion, it at once reconciles him to the law, and makes him willing to put on the yoke.

The ſame thing is a conſtant and growing principle of obedience to the believer. He ſees that he is not his own. He perceives and admits his Creator's and Redeemer's right. He is convinced, that as all things were made for, as all things ſhall finally tend to, ſo that every intelligent creature ought ſupremely to aim at the glory of God. It is this radient principle that chiefly conſtitutes the difference between genuine obedience, and that conſtrained ſervice which may be ſometimes falſely ſo called.

Hence it is that true obedience is conſidered as a debt that is *due* to God, falſe obedience on the contrary is conſidered as a debt *charged* upon God. The real chriſtian is happy in ſo far as he is able to obey, and ſincerely grieves for any remaining backwardneſs and reluctance in his mind. The yoke may well be ſaid to be eaſy, when he is brought to that temper and diſpoſition, that it is not what he does, but what he omits, that fills him with grief, or covers him with ſhame.

2. The Redeemer's yoke is eaſy and his burden light, becauſe all his commands are in themſelves perfectly juſt and right. It is hard indeed, to be obliged to do what we cannot approve, and ſo long as the ſinner has any objection againſt the law, obedience muſt be a burden. But every renewed mind obtains a diſcovery of the infinite amiableneſs of the divine nature, and the excellence and perfection of the divine law. The law is holy, ſays the Apoſtle, Romans 7. " Wherefore the law is holy, and " the commandment holy, and juſt and good." The law of God, is a tranſcript of his own infinite excellence, and therefore muſt be perfect and faultleſs. We may take up this matter in a very ſimple, and at the ſame time clear and conſpicuous point of view. The ſum of the moral law is, " Thou ſhalt love," &c. The whole is contained under theſe heads, eſpecially the firſt of them, from which the other is a corollary. Is there any thing more manifeſtly reaſonable, than that we ſhould love ſupremely, what is ſupremely excellent? or where is the rival, that can plead a better title to our affection. If he hath commanded us to love what was not amiable, or to do what was not reaſonable, there would have been ground for complaint. If we take the ſenſe of the ſecond table, by itſelf, we ſhall ſee the ſame thing very plainly, " Thou " ſhalt love thy neighbor as thyſelf;" or which is the ſame thing, " whatſoever ye would, that men do unto " you, do ye the ſame unto them." Is this unreaſonable? Is any man's reaſon ſo perverted, or his conſcience ſo depraved, as to complain of this, as an unjuſt, or oppreſſive law. There are ſome who talk upon this ſubject, in ſuch a manner, as we may truly ſay of them, with the

apoſtle, "They ſpeak of the law, and know neither what "they ſay, nor whereof they affirm;" and they will ſay, our Saviour has made merciful abatements of the law. Pray has he made any abatement of the love of God, and of our neighbor? Would you be ſatisfied to hear any man trace out a ſyſtem of moral duty, and make any alteration in theſe? Yet they are the whole in ſubſtance; wherever theſe are, every thing will follow of courſe. If you love God ſupremely, and your neighbor as yourſelves, you will neglect no duty to the one or to the other.

When I am upon this branch of the ſubject, the reaſonableneſs of God's commands, it will be proper to obviate an apparent, and at the ſame time, an important objection. You will perhaps ſay, to keep the commands of God, is above our power. Have not you yourſelf, often taught us, that no mere man in this life, is able perfectly to keep the commandments of God. Can that be reaſonable then that is impoſſible? Now conſider I pray you what ſort of impoſſibility this is. It is not natural, but moral. It is not want of power, but want of inclination. Nothing is required of us that is unſuitable to our ſituation, or above our natural powers; ſo far from it, that even what was our duty before, if by any accident it becomes impoſſible in this ſenſe, it ceaſes to be a duty. God no where commands you to be taller or ſtronger, than he has made you: and though he commands you to labor, working with your hands, if he confines you by ſickneſs, this duty no longer binds. He has given you faculties, and natural powers for every thing that he requires. Are not all your powers, both of mind and body, as fit for your Maker's ſervice, as any other purpoſe? Is not the tongue as fit to ſpeak truth, as falſehood: and every member of the body as fit to do what is lawful or uſeful, as what is ſinful or hurtful: The commands of God, then, are neither impoſſible nor difficult to thoſe, who are willing to obey them. No man can ſay with truth, that he deſired with all his heart, do his Maker's will, and could not. But perhaps ſome will ſay, this indiſpoſition itſelf, is my nature, I cannot help it. If any think this excuſe may be offered to God, let him firſt make trial of offering it to his fellow

creature; or ſuppoſe another to offer it to himſelf. Suppoſe you ſhould complain of another, for ſtealing your ſubſtance, or blaſting your name, or otherwiſe injuring you; and that he ſhould anſwer, that he could not help it. What, you would ſay, you could not help it; what neceſſity obliged you? Why ſays he, it was my nature, becauſe I hate you, and it grieves me to ſee you proſper. Would that be accepted as an excuſe? I think not; for it is the very eſſence of the injury. On the whole, it plainly appears, that the commands of God, are all reaſonable and juſt, neither can they ſuffer any abatement, without infringing upon the holineſs of his own nature, and the wiſdom and equity of his government itſelf.

3. The Redeemer's yoke is eaſy, and his burden light, becauſe all his commands have an immediate and direct tendency to promote our own comfort and happineſs. They are not leſs reaſonable as they expreſs the right of the Creator, than they are gracious, as they are calculated to promote the intereſt of the creature. I do not mean here, only or chiefly, the great reward which he hath in mercy provided and promiſed to thoſe, that keep them, but that in their own nature, they are fitted to promote our happineſs.

I have before ſufficiently taken notice, that we are not to underſtand, by keeping the commands of God, a conſtrained outward obedience, without the inclination of the heart. Conſtrained obedience, I confeſs, is neither acceptable to God, nor delightful to man. But when the ſervice of God, is choſen from the heart, it is both delightful and profitable in all reſpects. If we examine the matter with care, we ſhall find, that true religion conſiſts in the exerciſe of the moſt noble and grateful affections of mind, or rather the one leading diſpoſition, which when rightly directed as to its object, makes the ſum of religion, and is alſo the ſource of felicity. It is love, ſupreme love to God, and through him, and for him, to all his creatures, is the ſum of religion, and muſt not every body be ſenſible, that this is a temper and frame of mind, much more deſirable, than its oppoſite. Carry the one and the other, through all their branches and expreſſions, and ſee if they will bear

the compariſon. From love ſpring thankfulneſs, contentment, ſubmiſſion, benevolence, beneficence, meekneſs, compaſſion, forgiveneſs; and from hatred ſpring ambition, rage, impatience, malevolence, envy, revenge and cruelty. If there were no law of God at all, which of thoſe tribes of affections is moſt deſirable of itſelf, or moſt conducive to our inward comfort and peace?

If we try this matter by experience, let us aſk the children of God, whether they have found his ſervice burdenſome; whether they would exchange a meek, thankful, and contented frame of ſpirit, for the ſtorms of rage, envy, or ambition. Do they look with a jealous or envious eye, on the liberty of wicked men? on the contrary, they would not exchange with any of them, a priſon for a palace, or a ſcaffold for a throne. Perhaps, though there is great blindneſs in the underſtanding itſelf of wicked men, we may learn the truth even from their experience and confeſſions. We many times hear them acknowledge their bondage; and when they do not explicitly acknowledge it, yet it is eaſy to perceive it. You never hear a bad man taking comfort to himſelf, from the evil he has done, but ſometimes comparatively from the greater evil that they have not done. Without going particularly through every minute circumſtance, let us juſt ſay in general, that whether we conſider the inward temper, or the outward practice, our relations, buſineſs, and enjoyments in life, or hope for futurity, we cannot in any inſtance depart from the commandments of God, without at the ſame time acting contrary to our own manifeſt intereſt: ſo that Wiſdom ſays with great truth and juſtice, Prov. viii. 36. "He that ſinneth againſt me, "wrongeth his own ſoul: all they that hate me love "death."

4. The Redeemer's yoke is eaſy, and his burden light, becauſe he has given the moſt free and gracious invitation to ſinners to return to God. By his ſufferings he purchaſed their pardon, and is inveſted with full authority to negociate peace. "Thus it is written, and thus it be-"hoved him to ſuffer, that repentance and remiſſion of "ſins," &c. What we are particularly to remember up-

on this subject, is that the invitation is without reserve or exception, to all of every character, however deep and aggravated their offences. Is. i. 18. "Come now, and let "us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be "as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they "be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all accep-"tation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sin-"ners; of whom I am chief." The offer is also free as to the terms, without any costly or meriting condition. Is. 55. 1. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the "waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and "eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and "without price." Rev. xxii. 17. "And the spirit and "the bride say, come; and let him that heareth say, come; "and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, "let him take the water of life freely." Can there be any thing more encouraging than these gracious invitations? Here it is that we ought to take in the wise and happy constitution of the Redeemer's person, as the son of man, as well as the son of God, and the meekness and gentleness of his dispositon, this was propheſied of him of old. Isaiah xlii. 1, 2, 3. "Behold my servant whom I uphold; "mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my "spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the "Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his "his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall "he not break; and the smoaking flax shall he not "quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." This was beautifully and admirably fulfilled by his appearance in the flesh, by the meanness of his birth, though not of his parentage, by the poverty and self-denial of his life, by the meekness and lowliness of his carriage, not only through life, but in the last and suffering stage of it; for he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; when he was reviled, he reviled not again. So that he might with the greatest justice say as in the context take my yoke.

5. The Redeemer's yoke is easy, and his burden light, because he hath made abundant provision of divine

ſtrength, to enable us to keep his commandments. How gracious theſe laws, when the law-giver communicates ſtrength for performance. This takes away all objection, and removes every difficulty. What is impoſſible with man, is poſſible with God. There is no heart ſo hard, but omnipotence is able to ſoften it; no temper ſo depraved, but the Creator is able to renew it. The converſion of a ſinner is always conſidered in ſcripture as the work of God. "God who at firſt commended the light to ſhine out "of darkneſs," &c. The promiſe of the new covenant is thus deſcribed by Ezekiel xxxvi. 25. "Then will I ſprinkle "clean water upon you, and ye ſhall be clean: from all "your filthineſs, and from all your idols, will I cleanſe "you." And in the New Teſtament, faith which unites us to Chriſt, and every other good diſpoſition is repreſented as the gift of God, Eph. ii. 8. "For by grace are ye "ſaved, through faith; and that not of yourſelves: it is "the gift of God."

And as the converſion of ſinners to the daily growth of the ſpiritual life, in believers, is to be imputed entirely to the ſame cauſe, for this end it was, that it pleaſed the Father that all fullneſs ſhould dwell in Chriſt; and we have this teſtimony from the apoſtle John i. 16. "And of "his fulneſs have all we received, and grace for grace."

THE GLORY OF THE REDEEMER IN THE PERPETUITY OF HIS WORK.

A

SERMON.

PSALM lxxii. 17.

His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.

ACTION SERMON.

MY BRETHREN,

THE whole syſtem of Providence and grace was fixed on the eternal purpoſe of God, before the foundation of the world. Hence he is repreſented, Iſ. xlvi. 10. as, "declaring the end from the beginning, and from "ancient times the things that are not yet done, ſaying, "My counſel ſhall ſtand, and I will do all my pleaſure." The writings of the Old Teſtament give us the hiſtory of the ſeveral openings of this plan, during that diſpenſation, in which we may obſerve almoſt continual references to the appearance of an illuſtrious perſon, at a certain important period, called the fulneſs of time.

The appearance of the Saviour in our nature, including his obedience, his ſufferings, and death, his triumphant reſurrection and aſcenſion, was an event ſo aſtoniſhing in itſelf, and ſo great in its effects, as being the means appointed of God for the redemption of a loſt world, that we need not be ſurpriſed at the great care taken in the Old Teſtament church to keep it always in view. It was natural for holy and good men, who had ſo many intimations given them of it, to think on it with pleaſure; and when they were led to ſpeak of future times, to bring in this remarkable period, and mention it with rapture. And when God inſpired his ſervants to prophecy of the proſperity and happineſs of his church and kingdom, he could not fail to raiſe their deſcriptions, and lead them to give ſuch views of things as were ſuitable to that great event, which was to be ſuch a ſignal illuſtration of his glorious goodneſs, and ſo great a bleſſing to mankind.

Hence it is, that we find ſeveral prophecies begun, in appearance, to celebrate ſome public bleſſing, at or near the times in which they were delivered, gradually ſo heightened by ſeveral expreſſions, as we may perceive that in their full extent they could only relate to the times of the Meſſiah. Such, for inſtance, is that in my text: for if we lay together the accounts we have of Solomon, in ſcripture, and the felicity of his reign; if we remember the ſcandalous ſteps he made in the latter part of his life, the dreadful rent that happened in the reign of his ſon and immediate ſucceſſor; and that after the courſe of a few ages, Judah was carried into captivity,—we muſt be ſenſible, that the expreſſions in my text, are by far too much exalted, if nothing elſe was intended by them. But if we conſider them as relating to Meſſiah the Prince, then we ſee every thing literally fulfilled to the utmoſt import and extent of the prophetic language, "His name ſhall endure "forever: his name ſhall be continued as long as the ſun; "and men ſhall be bleſſed in him; all nations ſhall call "him bleſſed."

It is below the majeſty of the ſcriptures, to make uſe of ſtrong and lofty expreſſions to denote a very common and ordinary event, to which they cannot be applied without

making great abatements. This is a fault men often fall into; but it would be very unjuſt to impute it to perſons ſpeaking under the immediate influence of the Spirit of God. We may therefore lay it down as one good rule for underſtanding the prophetic writings, that whenever they riſe far above the ſubject they were treating of, into expreſſions literally applicable to the Meſſiah, and which, in their full extent, can belong to none but him, he is to be conſidered as chiefly in the view of the Spirit of God. Now, this being the caſe with my text, as I hope appears ſufficiently from what has been already ſaid, I ſhall conſider it as a noble and animated prophecy of the glory of his reign; which will be the more proper introduction to this day's work, as what we are now to be employed about is an eminent part of its accompliſhment.

In diſcourſing further on it at preſent, I ſhall circumſcribe the ſubject, and only,

I. Endeavor to open the import of this magnificent declaration, as underſtood of Chriſt, "His name ſhall endure "for ever," &c.

II. To make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and aſſiſtance in the preſent duty.

Firſt, then, let us endeavor to open the import of this magnificent declaration as underſtood of Chriſt. His name ſhall endure for ever, &c. and in the firſt place it carries in it an aſſurance of the greatneſs of his power as a Saviour, and the perfect ſecurity of all thoſe who put their truſt in him. The word name often ſignifies the excellence or perfection of the perſon named or referred to. This is eſpecially the caſe in ſcripture, with reſpect to God, where his name is juſt, his glory and all ſufficiency is revealed. The name of the Lord is in many paſſages of equivalent meaning with the power of God: thus, Prov. xviii. 10. "The name "of the Lord is a ſtrong tower; the righteous runneth into "to it, and is ſafe." Pſal. xx. 1. "The Lord hear thee "in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob de-"fend thee." This may with the greater propriety be applied to Chriſt, that you may know the name of Jeſus, was, by the expreſs appointment of the angel of the Lord, given

to him at his birth, to denote the great deliverance he was to work for ſinners, in ſaving them from their ſins. This is the great errand on which the Son of God came into the world, 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful ſaying, "and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came in- "to the world to ſave ſinners; of whom I am chief." The ſucceſs he ſhould have in this work is often celebrated, as Iſaiah liii. 10, 11. "Yet it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him; "he hath put him to grief: when thou ſhalt make his ſoul "an offering for ſin, he ſhall ſee his ſeed, he ſhall pro- "long his days, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhall proſper "in his hand. He ſhall ſee of the travail of his ſoul, and "ſhall be ſatisfied: by his knowledge ſhall my righteous "ſervant juſtify many; for he ſhall bear their iniquities." His power as a Saviour, to break the charms of Satan, and to deliver the captive ſoul, is frequently declared in the ſtrongeſt terms, as Iſaiah xlii. 6, 7, 8. "I the Lord "have called thee in righteouſneſs, and I will hold thine "hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant "of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the "blind eyes, to bring out the priſoners from the priſon, "and them that ſit in darkneſs out of the priſon-houſe. I "am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I "not give to another, neither my praiſe to graven images." Iſaiah lxiii. 1. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with "dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his "apparel, travelling in the greatneſs of his ſtrength? I "that ſpeak in righteouſneſs, mighty to ſave." This power of Chriſt to ſave, ſeems to be plainly called his name, 1 John iii. 23. "And this is his commandment, that we "ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and "love one another, as he gave us commandment." Thus it is reaſonable to think, that the power of Chriſt as a Savi- our is celebrated in our text, as what would ever remain a ſure and plentiful ſource of ſalvation to mankind, and be ever depended upon and acknowledged as ſuch, by all the redeemed.

This glory of Chriſt's name as a Saviour, has a particu- lar reſpect to the wretched and deplorable ſtate of thoſe, who are the objects of his mercy. That there are none

beyond the reach of his power. That there is none ſo loaded with guilt or ſo ſtained with pollution, but he is able to purchaſe their pardon, and to effect their deliverance. Perſons you know afflicted with inveterate and dangerous diſeaſes, are apt to hearken with eagerneſs to the name of an eminent phyſician, from whoſe ſkill they may entertain ſome hopes of recovery, and the greater and more illuſtrious his name is, they are apt to place the greater confidence in him. So when we hear that Chriſt's name ſhall endure for ever, it ſhould encourage all ſinners of whatever rank to fly to him, and to put their truſt in him. God reaſons thus in illuſtrating his own mercy, Iſaiah i. 18, 19. "Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord; "though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as "ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as "wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye ſhall eat the "good of the land:" and to the ſame purpoſe, If. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous "man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, "and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, "for he will abundantly pardon." But he hath given us ſtill greater encouragement, by committing the work of our ſalvation to ſo glorious a perſon, in whoſe hand it cannot fail, Pſal. lxxxix. 18, 19. "For the Lord is our "defence; and the holy One of Iſrael is our King. Then "thou ſpakeſt in viſion to the holy One, and ſaidſt, I have "laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one "choſen out of the people." Iſaiah ix. 6. "For unto us "a child is born, unto us a ſon is given, and the govern-"ment ſhall be upon his ſhoulder; and his name ſhall "be called Wonderful, Counſellor, The mighty God, "The everlaſting Father, The Prince of peace." Not to inſiſt on the many paſſages of the New Teſtament, which point our attention to the power and dignity of Chriſt, I ſhall only mention, Heb. vii. 25. "Wherefore he is "able alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt that come unto "God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion "for them."

I ſhall only further ſay, that the glory of Chriſt's name, as an almighty Saviour, may be conſidered in its ſuperior

luſtre to every thing that might be ſuppoſed to come in competition with him, or pretend to be put in this place. This is certainly the meaning of a great name, when applied to men. He is ſaid to obtain the greateſt name, who outſtrips or eclipſes others by the glory of his deeds; the ſame muſt be the meaning of this paſſage, as applied to our Redeemer; "his name ſhall endure for ever." The names of others ſhall ſoon be loſt. Their inferior brightneſs will ſoon decay: but his ſhall continue for ever with unfading and increaſing luſtre.

This, my brethren, is a circumſtance that ought never to be omitted. We cannot honor Chriſt as an almighty Saviour, unleſs we believe and remember, that he is the only Saviour. There are ſome paſſages in the prophetic writings, in which God aſſerts his own incommunicable glory, in oppoſition to the vanities of the Gentiles, and that in language inimitably ſtrong, Iſa. xl. 17, 18. "All "nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted "to him leſs than nothing, and vanity. To whom then "will ye liken God? or what likeneſs will ye compare "unto him?" Iſa. xliii. 10, 11, 12, 13. "Ye are my "witneſſes, ſaith the Lord, and my ſervant whom I have "choſen: that ye may know and believe me, and under-"ſtand that I am he: before me there was no God form-"ed, neither ſhall there be after me. I, even I am the "Lord, and beſide me there is no Saviour. I have de-"clared and have ſaved, and I have ſhewed, when there "was no ſtrange God among you: therefore ye are my "witneſſes, ſaith the Lord, that I am God. Yea, before "the day was, I am he; and there is none that can deli-"ver out of my hand: I will work, and who ſhall let it?" Hoſ. xiii. 4. "Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land "of Egypt, and thou ſhalt know no God but me: for "there is no ſaviour beſide me." The ſame peculiar and excluſive honor belongs to Chriſt, as the hope of ſinners, Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there ſalvation in any other: "for there is none other name under heaven given among "men whereby we muſt be ſaved."

I might illuſtrate this ſenſe of the paſſage before us, by ſhewing you that all the rites and ceremonies of the an-

cient diſpenſation, derived their efficacy from their relation to Chriſt. But I ſhall only tell you, that all the dependance which you place upon any thing elſe for your acceptance with God, is an injury to the honor of your Redeemer; that all ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſelf-dependance, to which there is in man by nature ſo ſtrong a tendency, obſcures the luſtre of that name which ſhall endure forever. That as he is able to ſave ſinners, to the uttermoſt, ſo they ſhall never obtain ſalvation, but by him. As it is he who laid the foundation of this great work, who carries it on through all the ſteps of its progreſs, and at laſt brings it to perfection, ſo he will have, and why ſhould he not have, the undivided glory.

2. This leads me to obſerve, that the magnificent declaration in the text, concerning Chriſt, implies the immortal honor and renown which he would acquire by the work of man's redemption. Every one knows, that in ſcripture ſtyle, to get a name is to acquire renown and glory, by ſome illuſtrious achievement; as 2 Sam. viii. 13. "And David gat him a name when he returned from "ſmiting of the Syrians in the valley of Salt, being "eighteen thouſand men."

And ſurely, my brethren, the undertaking of Chriſt was the moſt glorious in itſelf, the moſt arduous in its accompliſhment, the moſt bleſſed in its effects, and the moſt generous and diſintereſted in him, that can poſſibly be conceived. Think on this part of the ſubject, I beſeech you, with attention; and weigh the intimations we have of it in ſcripture. And for this purpoſe obſerve, that he acquired glory with God, with angels, and with men.

As the ſalvation of ſinners was a work in which the glory of God the Father, was eminently illuſtrated, ſo he is repreſented as looking with the higheſt complacency on Chriſt, in the undertaking and accompliſhment of it. Thus Math. iii. 17. "And lo, a voice from heaven, ſay-"ing, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſ-"ed." And again, at his transfiguration, Math. xvii. 5. "And while he yet ſpake, behold, a bright cloud overſha-"dowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which "ſaid, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well

" pleaſed; hear ye him." If. xlii. 1. " Behold my ſer-
" vant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my ſoul de-
" lighteth: I have put my ſpirit upon him, he ſhall bring
" forth judgment to the Gentiles." We ſee alſo, that God is repreſented as having put the higheſt honor on the Redeemer, in reward of his ſufferings. Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. " Wherefore God hath alſo highly exalted him, and given
" him a name which is above every name; that at the name
" of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven,
" and things in earth, and things under the earth; and
" that every tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is
" Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Heb. ii. 9. " But we ſee Jeſus, who was made a little lower than the
" angels for the ſufferings of death, crowned with glory
" and honor; that he by the grace of God ſhould taſte
" death for every man." See alſo Heb. xii. 2. " Look-
" ing unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of our faith;
" who, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the
" croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right
" hand of the throne of God."

I am ſenſible, my brethren, that this delight and approbation, which the Father is repreſented as expreſſing in the undertaking of the Son, is a ſubject of the moſt elevated nature, on which we ought to think and ſpeak with the utmoſt veneration, and with the greateſt reſerve. But ſince he hath revealed, it is our duty to improve it. Does it not carry your thoughts naturally to that expreſſion we find uſed in ſcripture, at the finiſhing of the material creation, mentioned at the end of every day's work, and repeated on a review of the whole, Gen. i. 31. " And
" God ſaw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it
" was very good."

We muſt needs conceive, the omnipotent Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, as poſſeſſed not only of abſolute and unchangeable perfection, but of infinite and inconceivable felicity. And may we not, muſt we not conceive, that this felicity, both in the contemplation and exerciſe of all his glorious attributes, and in nothing more than in the redemption of ſinners, in which his power, wiſdom, holineſs, juſtice and mercy, are ſeverally and

jointly ſo conſpicuouſly diſplayed. Nay, may we not venture, with reverence, further to ſay, that the three perſons in the Trinity, by their diſtinct properties, and peculiar agency, receive and impart everlaſting delight to one another, in their ineffable communion! The eternal word is repreſented as ſaying, Prov. viii. 30. "Then was "I by him, as one brought up with him; and I was dai-"ly his delight, rejoicing always before him."

2. The Redeemer acquired immortal renown among the angels, and the whole celeſtial hoſt. This we may ſpeak of with abundance of certainty, and with yet clearer comprehenſion. Doubtleſs their happineſs conſiſts in the viſion and contemplation of an infinite God. And therefore the manifeſtation and exerciſe of the divine perfections, both in Providence and grace, adminiſter to them matter of continual and increaſing delight. There is a beautiful repreſentation of their employment, Iſ. vi. 1, 2, 3. "In the year that king Uzziah died, I ſaw alſo the "Lord ſitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his "train filled the temple. Above it ſtood the ſeraphims: "each one had ſix wings: with twain he covered his face, "with twain he covered his feet, and with twain did he "fly. And one cried unto another, and ſaid, Holy, holy, "holy, is the Lord of hoſts; the whole earth is full of his "glory."

Now there is no reaſon to doubt that the work of redemption, in all its parts, in which they themſelves have an inferior employment, as miniſtring ſpirits, under the dominion of the uncreated angel of the covenant, muſt be a ſource of the pureſt felicity, and a ſubject of the moſt elevated praiſe. In a particular manner, the aſſumption of our nature into a perſonal union with the divine. You ſee how they ſing praiſes at the birth of the Saviour, Luke ii. 13, 14. "And ſuddenly there was with the angel a "multitude of the heavenly hoſt, praiſing God, and ſay-"ing, Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, "good will toward men."

The humiliation, ſufferings and death of God's eternal Son, his victory upon the croſs, his reſurrection from the dead, and triumph over principalities and powers, that is

to ſay, the revolted angels, muſt have often laid theſe ſervants of the living God, proſtrate in adoration. This is not a matter of conjecture, but clearly revealed; the whole plan of redemption being called a myſtery, which the angels deſire to penetrate. 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12. "Of "which ſalvation the prophets have inquired, and ſearched "diligently, who propheſied of the grace that ſhould come "unto you: ſearching what, or what manner of time the "Spirit of Chriſt which was in them did ſignify, when it "teſtified beforehand the ſufferings of Chriſt, and the glo- "ry that ſhould follow: unto whom it was revealed, that "not unto themſelves, but unto us, they did miniſter the "things which are now reported unto you by them that "have preached the goſpel unto you, with the holy Ghoſt "ſent down from heaven; which things the angels deſire "to look into."

Realize theſe great truths to yourſelves, my brethren. What think you were the views of the innumerable hoſts of cherubim and ſeraphim, when ſome of them conducted the aſcending Saviour, and others recieved him, when he entered within the veil! What think you were their views when they beheld the Mediator, God Man, exalted at the right hand of God, and had a new object of adoration, bearing the ſcars of his ſufferings, and known by the print of the nails, and by his bleeding temples? Heb. i. 6. "And again, when he bringeth in the firſt-begotten into "the world, he ſaith, And let the angels of God worſhip "him." Or, when they ſaw the dominion and power with which he was inveſted as King of kings, and Lord of lords, 1 Pet. iii. 22. "Who is gone into heaven, and is on "the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and pow- "ers being made ſubject unto him."

This renown of the Saviour muſt have been much greater among them, if it is true what many intelligent divines have ſuppoſed, that by the ſame glorious undertaking by which he redeemed elect ſinners, he eſtabliſhed and confirmed the obedient angels in a ſtate of holineſs and happineſs. I ſhall only further ſay, that we are expreſsly told, the adminiſtration of divine grace, or the government and preſervation of the church of Chriſt, is a continued illuſtra-

tion to the ſpirits above of his Father's wiſdom, Eph. iii. 10. "To the intent that now, unto the principalities and "powers in heavenly places, might be known by the "church the manifold wiſdom of God." Agreeably to this we find that, in the book of Revelation, which opens the great ſcenes of providence in the Church militant, there are ſeveral viſions in which the angels are repreſented as uniting their praiſes with redeemed ſinners, and directing their worſhip to the ſame great object. This leads me to obſerve,

3. That the Saviour acquired immortal renown among ſinners of mankind. If the angels who were either ſpectators only, or at moſt but partial ſinners in redeeming grace, do yet hold him in the higheſt honor, what is, and muſt be the ſenſe of gratitude which dwells in the heart of a pardoned ſinner. Oh, my brethren, how many circumſtances concur to bind the heart of the believer in eternal bonds of gratitude to Chriſt! Who can conceive or expreſs the debt of the ſinner to the Saviour. He is redeemed from everlaſting deſtruction, he is ſaved from wrath through him. Whoever is humbled, through fear of the vengeance, of a holy and jealous God, what fervent love will he bear to him, who hath wrought his deliverance, who hath purchaſed his pardon. If he is filled with a deep ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, of his aggravated and inexcuſeable provocations, with what rapture muſt he look upon that Saviour, who forgave him graciouſly, and loved him freely. Who is not moved with that inimitable picture of penitent love, when Mary Magdalene came in as it is related, Luke vii. 37, 38. "And, behold, "a woman in the city, which was a ſinner, when ſhe "knew that Jeſus ſat at meat in the Phariſees houſe, brought "an alabaſter-box of ointment, and ſtood at his feet be-"hind him weeping, and began to waſh his feet with tears, "and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kiſſ-"ed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." And how juſt and proper that reflection of our Saviour in the 47th verſe, "Wherefore, I ſay unto thee, Her ſins, "which are many, are forgiven; for ſhe loved much: "but to whom little is forgiven, the ſame loveth little."

The believer's eſteem and gratitude muſt be greatly increaſed by conſidering the unſpeakable coſt at which his deliverance was bought, the amazing, and affecting ſufferings which the Redeemer endured in his room. When he follows the patient and immaculate Saviour, by the eye of faith, from his inward anguiſh in the garden, to his ſhameful ſufferings, on the accurſed tree. With what relenting of heart, will he view that bleſſed head crowned with thorns, that ſacred body nailed to the croſs.—And when he carries forward his views to the glory and happineſs prepared for him, in the Redeemer's preſence above, what is the ſum of his obligations? What bounds can be ſet to this conqueror's renown? In what better way can we expreſs this, than by repeating and adopting theſe animating ſongs of praiſe, which are now making a great part of the worſhip of Heaven, Rev. v. 11, 12, 13, 14. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels "round about the throne, and the beaſts, and the elders: "and the number of them was ten thouſand times ten "thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands; ſaying with a "loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain to re-"ceive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, "and honor, and glory, and bleſſing. And every crea-"ture which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under "the earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea, and all that are "in them, heard I ſaying, Bleſſing, and honor, and glo-"ry, and power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, "and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. And the four "beaſts ſaid, Amen. And the four and twenty elders "fell down and worſhipped him that liveth for ever and "ever." And Rev. vii. 9, 10, 11.

3. In the laſt place the magnificent declaration concerning Chriſt, in the text implies the ſtability and perpetuity of his kingdom. The glorious Promiſes made to the houſe and family of David, have their chief and full accompliſhment in Chriſt the ſon of David. The earthly kingdom erected in that family, has long ago been deſtroyed, but the Redeemer's ſpiritual kingdom is an everlaſting kingdom, and his dominion ſhall have no end. This was the promiſe of the Father to the Meſſiah, Pſal. lxxxix.

36, 37. "His ſeed ſhall endure for ever, and his throne "as the ſun before me. It ſhall be eſtabliſhed for ever "as the moon, and as a faithful witneſs in heaven. Se. "lah."

It is one great end, of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, to perpetuate the Redeemer's name, "as often as ye "eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew forth the "Lord's death till he come," and it is a noble and reviving object of faith, that we know that his kingdom ſhall ſtand faſt forever. Hell itſelf may rage, and the princes of this world may combine to ſhake his glorious throne, but he that ſits in heaven ſhall laugh, the king of Zion ſhall hold their impotent attempts on deriſion. He ſhall maintain his intereſt in ſpite of all the efforts of his numerous and inveterate enemies. He hath often done ſo already, and ſhall continue to do ſo, till the end of time. Rev. xvii. 14.

I proceed now to make ſome practical application of what hath been ſaid. And,

Firſt, Let us adore the wiſdom and the power of Chriſt.

My brethren, When we conſider the ſimplicity of the goſpel, and the ſcandal of the croſs; when we conſider the whole ſyſtem of the doctrine according to godlineſs, and ſalvation by grace, how directly contrary it is to the pride of our nature, how many attempts have been, and continue to be made in every age, to ſuppreſs it by violence, to blacken it by ſlander, and to adulterate it by mixture; it is a ſtanding miracle that it has been able to hold its ground. Whoever will reflect either upon the preſent ſtate, or the paſt hiſtory of the church of Chriſt, muſt be obliged to ſay, that our faith does not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God. I muſt not omit to ſay that, we are perhaps as much indebted in this nation, to the goodneſs of providence in this reſpect, as any corner of the earth; and I cannot but be pleaſed with the choice which our Fathers made, of an emblem and motto for the church of Scotland, a buſh burning, but not conſumed. Let us rejoice in the faith, that the prince of the kings of the earth, who hath hitherto maintained his truths and intereſt againſt all the powers and cunning of

earthly policy, will continue to preſerve them, and that " his name ſhall endure forever: his name ſhall be con- " tinued as long as the ſun: and men ſhall be bleſſed in " him; all nations ſhall call him bleſſed."

2. You may learn from what hath been ſaid, the guilt and danger of the enemies of Chriſt; of all thoſe who ſet light by the glory of his perſon, and are unwilling to be indebted to the riches of his grace. I would willingly aſpire to the character which the apoſtle Paul aſſumes to himſelf. 2 Cor. ii. 17. " For we are not as many, which " corrupt the word God: but as of ſincerity, but as of " God, in the ſight of God ſpeak we in Chriſt." Chriſt is the only foundation of a ſinner's hope, 1 Cor. iii. 11. " For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, " which is Jeſus Chriſt." There may be a form of godlineſs; nay, there may be an oſtentatious parade of human virtue, but there can be nothing of the ſpirit and power of true religion, without a clear diſcovery and ſincere confeſſion of our loſt and depraved ſtate by nature, without a believing application to the mercy of God, through the blood of the atonement. Think not I beſeech you, to fruſtrate the word of God. The following teſtimony, comes from the Amen, the true and faithful witneſs, John xiv. 6. " I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no " man cometh unto the Father but by me." If ſo great honor is put upon the Redeemer by God the Father, and by his holy angels, how unſpeakably dangerous muſt it be, for ſinners to deſpiſe him. You can never deſpiſe this ordinance of God for ſalvation, but from the greateſt ignorance of yourſelves. My heart bleeds to think of the deluſion of the deſpiſers of the goſpel. What views can you have of the immaculate nature and holy law of God, if you truſt in yourſelves that you are righteous? What experience have you of the ſtability of theſe reſolutions that have been taken, as in your ſtrength? How weak and defective is that virtue, which is founded only on human prudence, or motives of preſent conveniency? One believing view of a Saviour on the croſs, will have a more powerful influence in mortifying corruptions, than all other arguments whatever. One fervent prayer, urged

in the name of Chriſt, will be more effectual for your preſervation, than a thouſand merely human reſolutions. Obey this ſalutary counſel, John xv. 4. "Abide in me, "and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, "except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye "abide in me."

3. From what has been ſaid, let me beſeech you to try your title to ſet down at the Lord's table. This ordinance was expreſsly inſtituted for putting honor on the Redeemer's name. He is the ſum and ſubſtance of it; his death and ſufferings, are the immediate ſubject of it. Have you then, my brethren, a high and inward eſteem of his perſon: a deep ſenſe of gratitude for his mercy; an entire and unſhaken reliance on his grace and power? Can you call the Searcher of hearts to witneſs, that you unfeignedly approve of this way of ſalvation, by which God is glorified, and the ſinner abaſed? Are you not aſhamed to profeſs it? And while others are ready to deſpiſe it, are you willing to glory in it? Does it pleaſe you to hear that the Saviour's name ſhall endure for ever? Is it with holy triumph, you reflect, that the glory of his kingdom ſhall be unchangeable, and his power to eternity itſelf? If this is your diſpoſition, I hope you will come with acceptance to his table; and I would flatter myſelf with the pleaſing expectation, that many of this day's worſhippers, ſhall be everlaſting monuments of their Redeemer's power; that they ſhall be happy ſubjects of his grace, and taſte of the conſolations of his goſpel on earth, and be heirs and partakers of his glory in heaven.

4. I would improve this ſubject, by earneſtly beſeeching every ſinner to embrace this ſalvation, and enliſt himſelf under the banner of this renowned Saviour. There are no doubt, many within theſe walls, who are ſtill in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity. O that the Redeemer would glorify his own power on their conviction and their ſalvation. "Gird on thy ſword upon thy thigh, O moſt mighty". Are there not ſome in this aſſembly, who are ſenſible they are lying under a load of unforgiven guilt; that they are ſtill ſlaves to habitual ſin? Does not the very ſacred action we are going about,

fill you with fear, that you are far from the ſtate and temper of God's children? Is not the old nature ſo ſtrong in you, that you have good reaſon to ſuſpect you have never yet put on the new? Let me beſeech and exhort you, to believe in the name of the Son of God. His merit is of infinite value; his power is of infinite efficacy. Many notorious ſinners have been from age to age, the happy witneſſes of both. Nothing in your condition ought to be a diſcouragement to you from applying to this all-ſufficient Saviour, he invites you by me, or rather I invite you by his commiſſion, and in his own terms, Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, "and I will give you reſt." Iſa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one "that thirſteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath "no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy "wine and milk without money and without price." John vi. 37. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wiſe "caſt out." How ſhall I urge your compliance; is not this name ſo powerfull that you may ſafely put your truſt in it? Are you not deſirous that your converſion to God ſhould illuſtrate it and make it glorious? I ſhall leave the matter with you after making this remark, that in vain do his enemies oppoſe him; in vain do ſinners deſpiſe him. He is getting him a name by the preaching of the goſpel. It is ſtill ſerving its purpoſe, for the calling and confirmation of the veſſels of mercy, for aggravating the guilt, and increaſing the condemnation of the obſtinate and diſobedient, Luke xx. 17, 18. "And he beheld them, and ſaid, "What is this then, that is written, The ſtone which the "builders rejected, the ſame is become the head of the "corner? Whoſoever ſhall fall upon that ſtone ſhall be "broken; but on whomſoever it ſhall fall, it will grind "him to powder."

5. In the laſt place, you may learn from what hath been ſaid, the wiſdom of God, in the inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper, and what ought to be your employment at his table. How wiſely fitted is this ordinance to keep up the remembrance of Chriſt as a Saviour, as a ſuffering dying Saviour. Perhaps no one circumſtance has contributed more to preſerve the pure uncorrupted doctrine of the goſ-

pel, than the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper. It ſets the truth before our eyes, while the words of the inſtitution repeats it in our ears, 1 Cor. xi. 24. "This is my body, "which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of "me." And verſe 25th, "This cup is the New Teſta- "ment in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in "remembrance of me." Profeſſing Chriſtians, but of worldly minds, may be aſhamed of the croſs, ſelf-righteous perſons may put ſomething elſe in the room of the croſs. Perverſe diſputers may oppoſe it, or keep it out of their writings, and erroneous teachers may keep it out of their ſermons, but there is no keeping it out of the ſacrament of his ſupper. Under this auſpicious banner, the name of Chriſt has been ſpread to the moſt diſtant nation, and handed down from the moſt diſtant ages, and ſo it ſhall continue till he come again, "for as often as ye eat this "bread," &c. How then ought ye to be employed, in a thankful and joyful acceptance of ſalvation through his blood, in the lively exerciſe of faith in his power, in deriving from his fulneſs every thing neceſſary for your ſupport under temptation or trial; and in fervent prayer, that his name may be hallowed, his kingdom may come, and his will may be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.—Amen and Amen.

THE PETITIONS OF THE INSINCERE UNAVAILING.

A

SERMON.

PSALM lxvi. 18.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

MY BRETHREN,

THERE is not, I think, a more ſtriking light in which we can conſider an aſſembly of profeſſing chriſtians, than as united in their common relation to God, and upon an equal footing, as to outward privileges, but very different, as to their inward character. This difference ſhall only be completely manifeſted in the final deciſion of their ſtate at the laſt day. The mixture of ſaints and ſinners muſt continue till that time, when there ſhall be an eternal ſeparation of the precious from the vile, of the ſheep from the goats. Muſt then, all things continue in ſuſpence and uncertainty till the great day? Is there no way by which we can judge, at preſent, what will be the event at that intereſting period?

What is now the inward temper, or the ſpiritual ſtate, and what ſhall be the eternal condition of every perſon here preſent is perfectly known to God, the ſearcher of

all hearts. It cannot be known indeed, with any certainty, by his fellow ſinners, but it may be known in a great meaſure, by every one with regard to himſelf. It may be known with ſuch a degree of evidence as to deliver him from diſtreſſing anxiety, and even to fill him with the moſt joyful hope and expectation. Is not this ſufficient? and ought it not to excite every one of us to a ſerious and impartial trial of that great queſtion, in which we have no leſs than an infinite concern. This ought to be our care, in a particular manner, when we have in view to make a near and ſolemn approach to God, in his ſanctuary on earth, becauſe his acceptance of our worſhip in the body, is an earneſt, and pledge of his final approbation, as appears from the words of the text, "If I regard "iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," and likewiſe from another paſſage, "John ix. 31. "Now, we "know that God heareth not ſinners: but if any man be "a worſhipper of God, and doeth his will, him he hear-"eth."

This Pſalm was compoſed, in all probability by the Pſalmiſt David, though ſome are of a contrary opinion, and attribute it to one of the prophets, after the captivity. The inſpired author celebrates the goodneſs of God in ſome ſignal and national deliverance, and towards the cloſe of the Pſalm, takes particular notice of the diſtinguiſhing kindneſs of God to himſelf, as in Pſalm lxvi. 16. "Come "and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what "he hath done for my ſoul." He then conſiders the countenance and acceptance he had met with from God, as an evidence of his own ſincerity in the 18th and 19th verſes, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will "not hear me; but verily God hath heard me; he hath "attended to the voice of my prayer." I cannot at this time take in the whole compaſs of this ſubject, or conſider how the one of theſe aſſertions is related to the other, but as the firſt of them contains an intereſting truth of itſelf, and very proper for the trial of our ſtate,

I ſhall endeavor, through divine aſſiſtance, to illuſtrate it, in the following method.

I. I ſhall conſider what is implied in regarding iniquity in the heart.

II. What is to be underſtood by God's not hearing ſuch perſons. And,

III. I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction.

In the firſt place, then, let us conſider what is implied in regarding iniquity in the heart. And I think it is plain, that theſe words do not directly point at open, ſcandalous and profane ſinners, who have burſt every bond, and look with diſdain and defiance in the face of every reprover. There are too many of this character, my brethren, who fall under the deſcription of the prophet Jeremiah, ch. xliv. ver. 16 and firſt clauſe of the 17th, and who practically ſay, " As for the word that thou haſt " ſpoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not " hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatſoever " thing goeth forth out of our own mouth." To theſe I ſhall ſpeak in the application of the ſubject, as there is no doubt that they regard iniquity in the heart, ſince they openly and obſtinately practice it in the life. But certainly the words of the text do chiefly relate to thoſe whoſe characters are more doubtful, both to others and to themſelves. Many there have been in every age, and there are many amongſt us, who maintain their characters before men; but when weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary, ſhall be found wanting; but, at the ſame time, by the power of ſelf-deceit, they are ready to ſay, they ſhall have peace, though they walk after the imagination of their own hearts. For undeceiving all ſuch perſons, and for the trial of others, that they that are approved, may be made manifeſt, let me beſeech your attention to the following particulars.

1. They regard iniquity in their hearts, who practice it ſecretly, who are under reſtraint from the world, but are not poſſeſſed of an habitual fear of the omniſcient God, the ſearcher of all hearts, and from whoſe eyes there is no covering of thick darkneſs where the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves. Jer. xxiii. 24. " Can any hide

" himſelf in ſecret places, that I ſhall not ſee him ? ſaith " the Lord : do not I fill heaven and earth ? ſaith the Lord." If you remember in what manner I ſtated the general meaning of the words, you will be ſenſible that I do not here chiefly point at groſs hypocriſy, or thoſe who under the cloak of religion, practice all manner of wickedneſs in their ſecret retirement. There are many others on whoſe conduct the judgment of men has a ſtrong, though at the ſame time an inſenſible effect; who are perhaps regular and guarded in their viſible deportment, but on whom a ſenſe of the continual preſence of the inviſible God, with whom they have to do, hath not a commanding and habitual influence. It is a dangerous ſymptom of this, when your repentance is very ſlight, and you eaſily forgive yourſelves for thoſe ſins of which the world is ignorant, or in thoſe that are known, when you remember the ſhame longer than the ſin.

How many unhappy examples of this do we ſee every day ? How many can go very eaſily under their ſins that are known only to God, but are filled with vexation when they have been betrayed into what expoſes them to the cenſure of their fellow-creatures. There are ſome who ſeem to be much more affected with the cenſure of others for trifling errors, than the diſpleaſure of God for heinous ſins. Nay, there are to be found ſome who evidently ſuffer more uneaſineſs from the cenſure of others, even where it is wrong, than from frequent neglects or breaches of the law of God. Now, what ſignifies the opinion of others, when it is founded on miſtake, or malice ? I do not mean, my brethren, to extinguiſh, or bid you endeavor to extinguiſh, a ſenſe of ſhame ; but let it be ſubordinate to the fear of God. The diſtreſs of a real penitent ſhould ariſe from the diſhonor he hath done to God. The reproach he hath brought on religion, ſhould wound him more deeply than the ſhame or fear he hath brought upon himſelf. Let the ſhamefulneſs of every bad action, bear a part in ſhewing you its abominable nature. But I am bold to affirm, that they are ſtrangers to true penitence, in whom a ſenſe of ſhame is ſtronger than a ſenſe of ſin.

This attachment to ſecret ſin admits of various degrees. It is ſometimes ſtronger, and ſometimes weaker; ſometimes general, and ſometimes more confined. There are inſtances in which it appears chiefly by the continuance and influence of ſome one darling luſt, which the ſinner cannot give up. This holds its place after others are ſurrendered; and though it dare not appear openly in the converſation, retains its dominion in the heart, and is indulged under the covert of ſecreſy. The arguments adduced in its defence, the excuſes offered for it by the ſinner to his own mind, are very many; but that it is a regarding iniquity in the heart, appears from its being concealed. It would ſeek no hiding place, if it were not one of the works of darkneſs.

2. They regard iniquity in the heart, who entertain andindulge the deſire of ſin, although in the courſe of providence, they may be reſtrained from the actual commiſſion of it. I am perſuaded the inſtances are not rare, of men feeding upon ſinful deſires, even when through want of opportunity, through the fear of man, or through ſome partial reſtraint of conſcience, they dare not carry them into execution. This will be beſt illuſtrated by particular examples; and therefore, I ſhall juſt mention the three following—impurity, ſenſuality, and malice.

Men may indulge themſelves in unchaſte and laſcivious thoughts; they may allow their imaginations to run out upon ſuch ſubjects, meditate and dwell upon them with delight, drink in with pleaſure ſuch diſcourſes or ſuch writings as preſent them with polluted images, although they are reſtrained from the commiſſion of groſs acts of uncleanneſs. All who voluntarily indulge themſelves in ſuch mental impurity, who think it enough to abſtain from the criminal action, or perhaps maintain ſome prudent reſerve and decency of converſation, but do not make conſcience of watching over their inward deſires; beyond all queſtion, they regard iniquity in the heart. For this we have the expreſs teſtimony of our bleſſed Saviour, Math. v. 27, 28. "Ye have heard that it was ſaid by "them of old time, Thou ſhalt not commit adultery: "but I ſay unto you, that whoſoever looketh on a woman

" to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her al-
" ready in his heart." Again,

Men may habitually indulge themſelves in ſenſuality of heart, when they have little or no opportunity of giving the rein to ſenſuality in practice. They may pleaſe themſelves with the imagination or expectation of worldly greatneſs, or worldly delights. Such things may be the theme of their meditation, and the objects of their ſinful effects, although they ſhall never come into their poſſeſſion. Their ſenſuality of heart may diſcover itſelf by impatient complaints of their own ſtate, which has not given them the means of indulgence, or by envious repining at the outward proſperity of others, who are more liberally provided for. Nay, I would ſay the ſame thing of thoſe who have the means of gratification, and yet are uſually ſober, if their reſtraint is owing to no better principle than the fear of ſickneſs, or the fear of man.

Once more, men may indulge themſelves in malice againſt others, although it be chiefly confined to the ſecret working of their hearts. Prudence or cowardice may hinder men from doing miſchief, even when they are full of inward malice. Envy, that corroding, waſting worm, chiefly preys upon the heart. Men may rejoice at the calamities of others, or indulge reſentment of ſuppoſed injuries, which is never carried into effect. All ſuch, my brethren, regard iniquity in their heart, and are living in the wilful and deliberate breach of the law of God, which is pure and ſpiritual, and hath the heart as its principal object. Math. v. 21, 22. " Ye have heard that it was
" ſaid by them of old time, Thou ſhalt not kill; and,
" whoſoever ſhall kill, ſhall be in danger of the judgment.
" But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever is angry with his
" brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judg-
" ment: and whoſoever ſhall ſay to his brother, Raca,
" ſhall be in danger of the counſel: but whoſoever ſhall
" ſay, Thou fool, ſhall be in danger of hell-fire."

3. They regard iniquity in the heart, who reflect upon paſt ſins with delight, or without ſincere humiliation of mind. Perhaps our real diſpoſition, both towards ſin and duty, may be as certainly diſcovered by the ſtate of our

minds after, as in the time of action. The ſtrength and ſuddenneſs of temptation may betray even a good man into the commiſſion of ſin; the backwardneſs of heart and power of inward corruption, may make duty burdenſome, and occaſion many defects in the performance: but every real Chriſtian remembers his paſt ſins with unfeigned contrition of ſpirit, and a deep ſenſe of unworthineſs before God; and the diſcharge of his duty, however difficult it may have been at the time, affords him the utmoſt pleaſure, on reflection. It is otherwiſe with many: they can remember their ſins without ſorrow, they can ſpeak of them without ſhame, and ſometimes even with a mixture of boaſting and vain-glory. Did you never hear them recall their paſt follies, and ſpeak of them with ſuch reliſh, that it ſeems to be more to renew the pleaſure, than to regret the ſin. Even ſuppoſing ſuch perſons to have forſaken the practice of ſome ſins, if they can thus look back upon them with inward complacency, their ſeeming reformation muſt be owing to a very different cauſe from renovation of heart. How oppoſite the ſentiments of Job, who conſiders his afflictions as a viſitation of God for his ſins in early life, Job xiii. 26, "For thou writeſt bitter "things againſt me, and makeſt me to poſſeſs the iniquities "of my youth." See alſo the prayer of the pſalmiſt, Pſ. xxv. 7. "Remember not the ſins of my youth, nor my "tranſgreſſions: according to thy mercy remember thou "me, for thy goodneſs ſake, O Lord."

4. They regard iniquity in the heart, who look upon the ſins of others with approbation, or indeed, who can behold them without grief. Sin is ſo abominable a thing, ſo diſhonoring to God, and ſo deſtructive to the ſouls of men, that no real Chriſtian can witneſs it without concern. Hence it is ſo frequently taken notice of in ſcripture, as the character of a ſervant of God, that he mourns for the ſins of others, Pſal. cxix. 136, 158, "Rivers of water run "down mine eyes: becauſe they keep not thy law."—"I beheld the tranſgreſſors, and was grieved: becauſe "they kept not thy word." See alſo the language of the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xiii. 17. "But if ye will not "hear it, my ſoul ſhall weep in ſecret places for your

" pride; and mine eye ſhall weep ſore, and run down " with tears, becauſe the Lord's flock is carried away " captive." 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8, " And delivered juſt Lot, " vexed with the filthy converſation of the wicked: (for " that righteous man dwelling among them, in ſeeing " and hearing, vexed his righteous ſoul from day to day " with their unlawful deeds.)" Have we then among us any, my brethren, who can look upon the ſins of others with complacency or approbation, who excuſe or palliate, who juſtify or defend them, how different is their temper from that of the ſcripture ſaints juſt now referred to?— Whatever outward regularity they may poſſeſs or pretend to, it is plain they are of the number of thoſe who regard iniquity in the heart. To ſome ſins their own nature may not prompt them, from others, the fear of man may reſtrain them; but the holy ſpirit ſurely never has reformed them. It is an infallible maxim, that no man can think lightly of ſin in others, who has an unfeigned hatred of it in himſelf.

This will hold with equal or with greater ſtrength, as to thoſe who make the ſins of others the ſubject of their mirth and entertainment. The wiſe man tells us, Prov. xiv. 9, " Fools make a mock of ſin." And the obſervation will hold equally true, whether we conſider the ſin committed, or the danger of the ſinner. Is there any thing we ſhould hate more than what is ſo offenſive to God; of which he hath expreſſed his deteſtation. And muſt he not regard iniquity in the heart, who can find pleaſure in what ſhould be viewed by every Chriſtian with horror? And what name does he deſerve, who can make himſelf merry with the everlaſting perdition of his fellow-creatures? We have the greateſt reaſon to lament the prevalence of ſin amongſt us, and the boldneſs of ſinners; and little leſs, to lament the reception which both ſin and ſinners meet with among thoſe, of whom better things might have been expected.

5. In the laſt place, I ſuſpect that they regard ſin in the heart, who are backward to bring themſelves to the trial, and who are not truly willing, that God himſelf would ſearch and try them. Sin often lurks ſecretly, and in diſ-

guiſe. He is a ſtranger to religion, who does not know this from experience. Hear the language of the Pſalmiſt, Pſ. xix. 12. "Who can underſtand his errors? cleanſe "thou me from ſecret faults." Pſ. cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search "me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know "my thoughts, and ſee if there be any wicked way in "me, and lead me in the way everlaſting."

If any, therefore, are unwilling to be tried, if they are backward to ſelf-examination, it is an evidence of a ſtrong and powerful attachment to ſin. It can proceed from nothing but from a ſecret dread of ſome diſagreeable diſcovery of the detection of ſome luſt, which they cannot conſent to forſake. The force of conſcience is ſuch, that ſome deception is neceſſary to keep the ſinner in peace with himſelf. Too much light would either debar him from his delights, or poiſon the enjoyment of them. This is ſtrongly deſcribed by our Saviour, John iii. 20. "For eve-"ry one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to "the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved."

We proceed now to the ſecond thing propoſed, which was to ſhow what is to be underſtood by God's not hearing thoſe who regard iniquity in their hearts. This expreſſion of God's not hearing them, may be conſidered very generally, as ſignifying that they are not, nor while they continue in that temper can be, the objects of his favors; he will not remember them with the love which he beareth to his choſen. But as the expreſſion is uſed in ſome particular and diſtinct ſignifications in ſcripture, which will merit our attention, I ſhall briefly mention the chief of them, which ſeem to be the four following.

1. He will not hear them when they cry to him for deliverance from affliction. I take this to be at leaſt one thing, if not the main thing, intended by the Pſalmiſt in the paſſage where the text lies. After giving praiſe to God for a ſignal deliverance, he draws this comfortable concluſion from it, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the "Lord will not hear me: but verily God hath heard me: "he hath attended to the voice of my prayer." It is one of the characters, as well as one of the privileges of the

children of God, that they fly to him as their refuge in diſtreſs; and he hath given his gracious promiſe, that he will hear them in mercy, Pſ. xci. 15. "He ſhall call upon "me, and I will anſwer him: I will be with him in trou- "ble, I will deliver him, and honor him." Pſ. l. 15. "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver "thee, and thou ſhalt glorify me." But thoſe who regard iniquity in their hearts, have no reaſon to expect that God will hear them in this ſenſe. They are liable to the calamities of human life; they are liable to the ſtrokes of God's righteous Providence: but they have no title to go to him for relief. Every affliction carries in it the ſeverity of a judge, without any mixture of the mercy of a father. It is true, that wicked men do ſometimes cry to God in diſtreſs, but not in the ſpirit of his children; and as we learn from this paſſage, their prayers do not find acceptance with him.

There are three different objects of deſire to a good man, while in affliction: the divine preſence to ſupport him under it; the ſanctified uſe of it, for the improvement of the ſpiritual life; and in due time, compleat deliverance from it. The two firſt, he that regards iniquity in his heart, will hardly aſk; and the laſt he ſhall not be able to obtain. The prayer of one unacquainted with God, is little better than the howling of deſpair and terror, without any mixture of filial confidence. Hoſea, vii. 14. "And "they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they "howled upon their beds." As to the ſanctified uſe of their ſufferings, they neither aſk nor receive it; on the contrary, they are commonly made worſe by their ſufferings, as earthen veſſels are but hardened in the fire. And as to deliverance from ſuffering, they ſhall never obtain more than perhaps a temporary ſuſpenſion of outward ſtrokes, till they fill up the meaſure of their iniquities, and be ripe for final deſtruction.

I cannot help, juſt hinting in this place, that when God viſits his children's faults with rods, and their ſins with chaſtiſements, till they forſake their ſins by true repentance, he will not hear them. If they have departed from the paths of truth and righteouſneſs, if they have taken of

the accurſed thing between him and them, there cannot be peace, Iſaiah lix. 1. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not "ſhortened, that it cannot ſave; neither his ear heavy, "that it cannot hear." The very intention of affliction to the children of God, is to ſeparate them from ſin, and it muſt continue till it produces its effect. What he ſays of the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, in general, is but an emblem of the manner in which he will treat every particular perſon of the true Iſrael, "Iſaiah i. 25. "And I will turn "my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy droſs, "and take away all thy tin:"

2. He will not hear them, when they intercede for others. It is in this ſenſe, that the word is uſed in the goſpel according to John ix. 31. "Now, we know that "God heareth not ſinners: but if any man be a worſhip-"per of God, and doth his will, him he heareth." We are expreſsly taught by the apoſtle James, that it is the prayer of faith, and the prayer of the righteous that hath peace with God, Jas. v. 15, 16. "And the prayer of faith ſhall "ſave the ſick, and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up; and if he "have committed ſins, they ſhall be forgiven him. Confeſs "your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that "ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righte-"ous man availeth much." I am ſenſible, my brethren, that this will ſeem of very little moment to many, or probably to the greateſt part of thoſe, who regard iniquity in their hearts. Not much accuſtomed to the exerciſe of prayer for themſelves, it will make but a light impreſſion on them, to be told that they will not be heard in their interceſſion for others. The truth is, many, if they would attend to it, carry their own condemnation in themſelves, from this very circumſtance. Conſcious that they have little intereſt at the throne of grace, they ſeldom think of employing it at all. But conſidering that there is ſcarcely any perſon wholly unrelated to others, and that many have occaſion, from time to time, to ſee thoſe to whom they are united, by the moſt tender ties, lying under the preſſure of affliction, it ought to cover them with confuſion, that they know not what it is to look to God, as the hearer of prayer, and to lend that help, which they ma

ſhortly require. When we ſee one member of a family lying under the rod, and a profane huſband or wife, parent or child, ſtanding by in hopeleſs diſtreſs, and prayerleſs tears, it is hard to ſay which of the two is the greateſt object of compaſſion.

And what an incitement ſhould it be to thoſe, who are often called to the duty of interceſſion, either from their office or their character, to walk circumſpectly, that they may not mar their confidence in God. Let them guard with double diligence againſt any thing that is provoking to God. Let them ſtrive to keep clear their intereſt in his favor, leſt they ſhould at once wound their peace and deſtroy their uſefulneſs, for if they regard iniquity in their heart, the Lord will not hear them.

3. He will not hear them when they draw near to him in worſhip. This alſo, is often the meaning of the expreſſion in ſcripture, Iſaiah i. 14, 15. "Your new moons, "and your appointed feaſts my ſoul hateth: they are a "trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when "ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from "you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear: "your hands are full of blood." There are many other paſſages to the ſame purpoſe, particularly that of Solomon, Prov. xv. 8. "The ſacrifice of the wicked is an abomina-"tion to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his "delight." The Pſalmiſt was ſo ſenſible of this, that he ſays, Pſalm v. 4, 5, 6, 7. "For thou art not a God that "hath pleaſure in wickedneſs; neither ſhall evil dwell "with thee. The fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in thy ſight: "thou hateſt all workers of iniquity. Thou ſhalt deſtroy "them that ſpeak leaſing: the Lord will abhor the bloody "and deceitful man. But as for me, I will come into "thy houſe in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy "fear will I worſhip toward thy holy temple."

This ought to make a deep and ſerious impreſſion on your minds. There are but too many who, though they live in the practice of ſin and regard iniquity in their hearts, do yet continue their outward attendance on the ordinances of divine inſtitution, and at ſtated times lay hold of the ſeals of God's covenant. Shall they find any

acceptance with him? No. He counts it a profane mockery; he counts it a facrilegious uſurpation, Pſalm l. 16, 17. "But unto the wicked God ſaith, What haſt thou "to do to declare my ſtatutes, or that thou ſhouldſt take "my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hateſt in- "ſtruction, and caſteſt my words behind thee." Shall they have any comfort in it. No, unleſs in ſo far as in righteous judgment, he ſuffers them to be deceived, and they are deceived, and moſt unhappy they, who lie longeſt under the deluſion, Pſalm l. 21. "Theſe things haſt "thou done, and I kept ſilence: thou thoughteſt that I "was altogether ſuch an one as thyſelf; but I will reprove "thee, and ſet them in order before thine eyes." Shall they have any benefit by it. No, inſtead of appeaſing his wrath, it provokes his vengeance. Inſtead of enlightening their minds, it blinds their eyes. Inſtead of ſanctifying their nature, it hardens their hearts. See a deſcription of thoſe who had been long favored with outward privileges, and gloried in them, John xii. 39, 40, "There- "fore they could not believe, becauſe that Eſaias ſaid a- "gain, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their "heart; that they ſhould not ſee with their eyes, nor un- "derſtand with their heart, and be converted, and I ſhould "heal them." So that nothing is more eſſential to an acceptable approach to God, in the duties of his worſhip in general, and particularly to receiving the ſeals of his covenant, than a thorough and univerſal ſeparation from all known ſin, Job xi. 13, 14. "If thou prepare thine "heart, and ſtretch out thine hands towards him; if ini- "quity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not "wickedneſs dwell in thy tabernacles."

4. He will not hear them when they cry for mercy at laſt. Sooner or later the ſinner's eyes ſhall be opened. Sooner or later he ſhall be convinced of the folly of his miſerable choice. Many of thoſe who regard iniquity in their hearts, ſleep in ſecurity, and flatter themſelves with miſtaken hopes; but, Gal. vi. 7, "Be not deceived: God "is not mocked; for whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall "he alſo reap." From the account given by our Saviour, it would appear that the final ſentence ſhall, in many in-

ſtances, be matter of ſurpriſe as well as terror to the ſinner, Matt. vii, 22, 23, "Many will ſay to me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name? and "in thy name have caſt out devils? and in thy name done "many wonderful works? And then will I profeſs "unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that "work iniquity." Nay, perhaps we may ſay that to ſome, the day of God's mercy may be over before the cloſe of life; and they may find no place for repentance, though they may ſeek it carefully, and with tears. Not but that wherever there is true penitence, even at the eleventh hour, forgiveneſs will be the effect; but we may juſtly ſuppoſe that there may be a deſpairing cry for mercy, from the apprehenſions of impending judgment, without any thorough conviction of ſin. The reception that ſuch will meet with, and the reaſon upon which it is founded, is repreſented in the ſtrongeſt language, Prov. i. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, "Becauſe I have called, and ye "refuſed; I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man "regarded; but ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, "and would none of my reproof: I alſo will laugh at "your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: "when your fear cometh as deſolation, and your de-"ſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; when diſtreſs and "anguiſh cometh upon you: then ſhall they call upon "me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, "but they ſhall not find me."

I proceed now to make ſome practical improvement of this ſubject for your inſtruction and direction. And, 1. Suffer me to ſpeak a little to thoſe who live in the open habitual practice of groſs ſin. It grieves me to think, my brethren, that any ſuch ſhould be found or ſuppoſed in this worſhipping aſſembly. It diſtreſſes me ſtill more, to think that any ſuch ſhould have the preſumption to aſk, or the art to obtain permiſſion, and the dreadful hardineſs to ſit down at the Lord's table. I ſhall deſcribe you not by your names, which are known to men, but your characters and hearts, which are open before God. Swearers and profaners of Jehovah's name,

deſpiſers of his Sabbaths, ſcorners of ſacred things, neglecters of prayer, ſons of violence, midnight rioters, beaſtly drunkards, unclean fornicators, takers and holders of unjuſt gain, liars and ſlanderers, hard-hearted oppreſſors, and whoſoever liveth under the dominion of known ſin. Is the nature of God ſo holy, is his law ſo ſpiritual, is his judgment ſo ſevere, that thoſe who but regard iniquity in their hearts, ſhall inevitably periſh; then how ſhall you eſcape the damnation of hell? Is memory ſo unfaithful, as not now to bring your ſins to remembrance? Is conſcience ſo ſeared as not to charge you with the guilt? Can you doubt the being, do you not feel the preſence, do you not fear the judgment of God? "The wicked "ſhall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget "God; for Tophet is ordained of old," &c.

Oh, that it would pleaſe God, by his omnipotent grace, to reach your hearts, to ſhake your confidence, to humble you to the duſt. I call God to record, that you have received warning. I know that you may deſpiſe it; I am afraid that many will do ſo. Away to your cups, away to to the bleſſed ſtage, that dear friend to virtue; away to your merry, ſocial life, drink confuſion to your preachers, and pour forth every term of reproach that your little wit can ſuggeſt, againſt theſe poor prieſt-ridden creatures, who are afraid of their miniſter's reproof. Alas, alas! when the king of terrors, on his pale horſe, ſhall make his approach, you will be of another mind, unleſs perhaps, as it often happens, you meet with a ſudden call, and immediate tranſlation from the fire of luſt to the fire of hell.

2. Let me intreat you, my dear brethren, from what has been ſaid, to ſearch and try yourſelves, whether you regard iniquity in your hearts, or not. This is the rather neceſſary, as you have in view an immediate and ſolemn appeal to God, that you are ſincere in his covenant. Does the fear of the Lord poſſeſs you in ſecret, as well as in public? Are you willing that it ſhould be ſo? Is it your daily ſtudy, and is it the ſubject of your daily prayer, to have a deeper and more lively impreſſion of his preſence upon your ſpirits? Is it truly matter of comfort to you, when you are delivered from the fear of human cenſure, or de-

ſire of human approbation? Have you ever got above both in your experience, and do you not wiſh to maintain the ſuperiority? If it is ſo, happy, happy are you indeed; and may the Lord himſelf lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Do you know what it is to mourn over ſecret ſins, the vanity of your minds, the worldlineſs of your affections? And do you truly make conſcience of keeping the heart with all diligence, becauſe out of it are the iſſues of life? I will not aſk, becauſe I know you cannot deny, that you have had many ſinful thoughts, in breach of every command of God. But are they approved, or abhorred? are they ſubmitted to, or reſiſted? Are they now recollected with pleaſure, with indifference, or with ſhame?

What are your thoughts with regard to the ſins of others? Have you ever grieved for them in truth? Do not think that I am leading you to oſtentation. I do not aſk you whether you have openly teſtified againſt them, or honeſtly reproved them; becauſe, though theſe are both important and binding duties, they may be more eaſily counterfeited; and I am not now preſſing you to the diſcharge of your duty to others, but trying your ſincerity before God. Have you therefore, mourned in ſecret for the ſins of others? have they ever brought you to your knees? have they added fervor to your prayers? If it be ſo, I cannot think that you regard iniquity in your own hearts. This is no Phariſaical hypocriſy. It is known only to God. The profane cannot curſe you for it, becauſe they do not hear it: and if they were told it, it is probable they would not believe it.

But methinks I hear ſome ſerious perſon ſay, I have attended to the interrogatories; and though I would fain hope I know ſomething of a ſenſe of duty in all, yet, oh! how miſerably defective have I been. Nothing like that deep ſenſe of the preſence of God, that humiliation of ſpirit for ſin, that concern for the divine glory, that I ought to have had, that I have ſometimes felt for a ſeaſon, and that I wiſhed to preſerve.

Therefore, my brethren, I would once more aſk you, can you now ſincerely pray that God would ſearch and

try your ways, discover every secret sin, convince you of it, humble you for it, and deliver you from it? Is there no reserve, no exception whatever, nothing that you are willing to cover, that you are backward to examine, and disposed to excuse? Is there no doubtful practice, but what you are willing to think of deliberately, to examine impartially, and if it either appears to be sinful, or but remaineth doubtful, to surrender freely? If you can say there is not, then after having pleaded your divorce from every sin, I have only further to rob you of every duty too, and leave you nothing whereof to glory; to call you to renounce all self-righteousness and self-dependance, and make you to say, "Not I, but the grace of God that was "with me: surely, in the Lord have I righteousness and "strength."

3. I shall only now shut up this discourse with giving you a very few directions for your future preservation.

1. Guard against the sin or sins that you may be most liable to, from your natural temper and constitution, which may be said to be your own iniquity, and the sin that most easily besets you. It is lamentable to think what disgraceful blemishes are sometimes to be seen in the conduct of the servants of God. I know this is permitted in Providence, and cannot be wholly prevented. But no watchful Christian will sit still easily under it. If such a sin gives him no rest, he should give it no quarter. Some very bad things are sometimes borne with, under the notion of unavoidable infirmities. Yet they are to the prejudice of your own peace; they are a reproach to your profession, and a dishonor to your master. If you cannot wholly destroy, I beseech you, wound and weaken them. If there is no probability that they will die wholly, but with the body, let it be seen that they are daily losing strength, and dying gradually.

2 Set a particular guard upon those sins that you may be opposed to, in your ordinary calling: in that way, where you go most frequently, the tempter knows he can most easily find you, and he will certainly be there to meet you. Besides, interest often pleads so strongly in behalf

of ſome ſins of this kind, and they are ſo much juſtified by example, that few can withſtand the temptation. But conſider, I beſeech you, that no honor, profit, or convenience can poſſibly counterbalance the loſs of God's favor. What a miſerable excellency is it indeed, to add a little to our earthly ſtore at the expence of his diſpleaſure, while we ourſelves are in his hand, and all that we have is in the moſt abſolute manner at his diſpoſal.

In the laſt place, if you deſire to be preſerved from the dominion of ſin, ſeat yourſelves often in the preſence of God. He ſeeth in ſecret; his eyes do ſee, his eye-lids try the children of men. Aſk of him, therefore, that he may not ſuffer you to deceive yourſelves, but lead you in the paths of righteouſneſs for his name's ſake.

CHRISTIAN MAGNANIMITY.

A

SERMON,

Preached at Princeton, September, 1775, the Sabbath preceding the ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT; *and again with Additions, September 23, 1787. To which is added,* AN ADDRESS *to the* SENIOR CLASS, *who were to receive the degree of* BACHELOR *of* ARTS.

1 THESS. ii. 12.

That you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you into his kingdom and glory.

THE preſent ſtate was intended to be, and I think muſt, by every perſon of reflection, be admitted to be a continual trial of the faith and conſtancy of a Chriſtian. It is therefore a duty we owe to others in general, but in a ſpecial manner, the elder to the younger, to give them faithful warning of the temptations and dangers, to which they muſt of neceſſity be expoſed, if they mean to walk in the paths of piety and virtue. It hath often occurred to me, in meditating on this ſubject, that as falſe money is moſt dangerous when it is likeſt to the true, ſo thoſe principles, and that character, which approach the neareſt to true religion, if notwithſtanding they are eſſentially different from it, will be moſt ready to impoſe on an uncautious and unſuſpecting mind. Therefore, if there

is ſuch a thing as a *worldly virtue*, a ſyſtem of principles and duty, dictated by the ſpirit of the world, and the ſtandard of approbation or blame with the men of the world, and if this is at bottom eſſentially different from, and ſometimes directly oppoſed to the ſpirit of the goſpel, it muſt be of all others, the moſt dangerous temptation, to perſons of a liberal education and an ingenious turn of mind.

This, if I am not miſtaken, is really the caſe. There are ſome branches of true religion which are univerſally approved, and which impiety itſelf cannot ſpeak againſt; ſuch as truth and integrity in ſpeech, honeſty in dealing, humanity and compaſſion to perſons in diſtreſs. But there are other particulars, in which the worldly virtue, and the Chriſtian virtue, ſeem to be different things. Of theſe I ſhall ſelect one, as an example, viz. ſpirit, dignity or greatneſs of mind. This ſeems to be entirely of the worldly caſt: It holds a very high place in the eſteem of all worldly men: The boldeſt pretenſions are often made to it, by thoſe who treat religion with neglect, and religious perſons with diſdain or defiance. It is alſo a virtue of a very dazzling appearance; ready to captivate the mind, and particularly to make a deep impreſſion on young perſons when they firſt enter into life. At the ſame time, the goſpel ſeems to ſtand directly oppoſed to it. The humility of the creature, the abaſement and contrition of the ſinner, the dependence and ſelf-denial of the believer, and above all the ſhame and reproach of the croſs itſelf, ſeem to conſpire in obliging us to renounce it.

What ſhall we ſay then, my brethren? Shall we ſay that magnanimity is no virtue at all, and that no ſuch excellence belongs to human nature? Or ſhall we admit that there is beauty and excellence in it—confeſſing at the ſame time that it does not belong to religion, and only ſay, that though we want this, we have many other and better qualities in its place? To this I can never agree; for every real excellence is conſiſtent with every other; nay, every real excellence is adorned and illuſtrated by every other. Vices may be inconſiſtent with each other, but virtues never can. And therefore, as magnanimi-

ty is an amiable and noble quality—one of the greateſt ornaments of our nature, ſo I affirm that it belongs only to true and undefiled religion, and that every appearance of the one, without the other, is not only defective, but falſe.

The Holy Scriptures, it is true, do chiefly inſiſt upon what is proper to humble our pride, and to bring us to a juſt apprehenſion of our character and ſtate. This was wiſe and juſt, becauſe of that corruption and miſery into which we are fallen, the contrary would have been unjuſt. It is evidently more neceſſary, in the preſent ſtate of human nature, to reſtrain pride, than to kindle ambition. But as the ſcripture points out our original dignity, and the true glory of our nature, ſo every true penitent is there taught to aſpire after the nobleſt character, and to entertain the moſt exalted hopes. In the paſſage which I have choſen as the ſubject of my diſcourſe, you ſee the Apoſtle exhorts the Theſſalonians to walk ſuitably to the dignity of their character, and the importance of their privileges, which is a ſhort but juſt deſcription of true and genuine greatneſs of mind.

My ſingle purpoſe, from theſe words, at this time, is to explain and recommend magnanimity as a Chriſtian virtue; and I wiſh to do it in ſuch a manner, as neither to weaken its luſtre, nor admit any degree of that corrupt mixture, by which it is often counterfeited, and greatly debaſed. Some infidels have in terms affirmed, that Chriſtianity has baniſhed magnanimity, and by its precepts of meekneſs, humility, and paſſive ſubmiſſion to injury, has deſtroyed that nobleneſs of ſentiment, which rendered the ancients ſo illuſtrious, and gives ſo much majeſty and dignity to the hiſtories of Greece and Rome. In oppoſition to this, I hope to be able to ſhew that real greatneſs is inſeparable from ſincere piety; and that any defect in the one, muſt neceſſarily be a diſcernible blemiſh in the other. With this view, I will, firſt, give you the principles of magnanimity in general, as a natural quality; ſecondly, I will ſhew what is neceſſary to give it real value, as a moral virtue; and, thirdly, ſhew that it ſhines with the moſt perfect brightneſs as a Chriſtian grace;

after, will improve the ſubject, by a practical application of what may be ſaid, for your inſtruction and direction.

Firſt, then, let me ſtate the principles of magnanimity, in general, as a natural quality. I think it muſt be admitted, that as there is a real difference between bodies, as to ſize and bulk, as well as other ſenſible qualities, ſo there is a real character of greatneſs, or meanneſs, applicable to the mind, diſtinct from its other qualities or powers. It is however, I apprehend, a ſimple impreſſion, which cannot be explained, or further analized, but may eaſily be felt, and is beſt illuſtrated by its effects. Theſe may be ſummed up in the following particulars: To magnanimity it belongeth to attempt, 1. Great and difficult things; 2. To aſpire after great and valuable poſſeſſions; 3. To encounter dangers with reſolution; 4. To ſtruggle againſt difficulties with perſeverance; and, 5. To bear ſufferings with fortitude and patience.

1. It belongs to magnanimity to attempt great and difficult things. Thoſe who, from a love of ſloth and eaſe, neglect the exerciſe or improvement of their powers, and thoſe who apply them with ever ſo great aſſiduity and attention, to things mean or of ſmall conſequence, are plainly deſtitute of this quality. We perceive a meanneſs and want of ſpirit in this reſpect, when particular perſons fall below their rank in life; or when, as is too frequently the caſe in any rank, they fall below human nature itſelf. When a prince, or other perſon of the firſt order and importance in human life, buſies himſelf in nothing but the moſt trifling amuſements, or arts of little value, we call it mean; and when any man endowed with rational powers, loſes them through neglect, or deſtroys them by the moſt grovelling ſenſuality, we ſay he is acting below himſelf. The contrary of this, therefore, or the vigorous exertion of all our powers, and particularly the application of them to things of moment and difficulty, is real magnanimity.

2. It belongs to magnanimity to aſpire after great and valuable poſſeſſions. It is more difficult properly to illuſtrate this as a branch of magnanimity, becauſe of its fre-

quent perverſion, which will be afterwards explained. It ſeems however, to be neceſſarily included in the general character. A great mind has great capacities of enjoyment as well as action. And as there is a difference between the bleſſings in our view, both in point of dignity and extent, ſuch a man will not eaſily be ſatisfied, or put up with what is either mean or ſcanty, while he can acquire and poſſeſs a better and more extenſive portion. The large and increaſing deſires of the human mind, have often been made an argument for the dignity of our nature, and our having been made for ſomething that is great and excellent.

3. It belongs to magnanimity to encounter dangers with reſolution. This is inſeparable from, and conſtitutes a leading part of the character. Even the moſt excellent and valuable ſervices to mankind, if they are attended with no difficulty at all, or meet with no oppoſition, though they retain the character of utility, yet, for want of this circumſtance, they loſe that of greatneſs.—Courage is always conſidered as a great quality; it has had the admiration, or rather adoration, of mankind in every age. Many, when they ſpeak of magnanimity, mean nothing elſe but courage; and when they ſpeak of meanneſs, have little other idea but that of timidity.—Neither is there, I think, any human weakneſs that is more the object of contempt and diſdain, than cowardice. which when applied to life in general, is commonly called puſillanimity.

4. It belongs to greatneſs, to ſtruggle againſt difficulties with ſteadineſs and perſeverance. Perſeverance is nothing elſe but continued and inflexible courage. We ſee ſome perſons, who ſhew the greateſt activity and boldneſs for a ſeaſon; but time and oppoſition weakens their force, and ſeems, if I may ſpeak ſo, to exhauſt their courage, as if they waſted the power by the exertion. Perſeverance, therefore, is neceſſary to greatneſs. Few things are more contrary to this character than ſickleneſs and unſteadineſs. We commonly join together the characters of weak and changeable.

5. In the laſt place, it belongs to greatneſs to bear ſufferings with fortitude and patience. This is a kindred quality to the former, and is neceſſary to complete the character of magnanimity. Such is the ſtate of human things, that ſuffering is in one way or another, wholly unavoidable. It often happens, that difficulties cannot be removed, or enemies cannot be conquered; and then it is the laſt effort of greatneſs of mind, to bear the weight of the one, or the cruelty of the other, with firmneſs and patience. This virtue has always been of the greateſt reputation. It is a well known ſaying of a heathen philoſopher, that a great man, ſuffering with invincible patience under a weight of misfortunes, is a ſight which even the gods muſt behold with admiration.

Having thus pointed out the principles, or rather enumerated the chief effects of magnanimity, as a natural quality, let us now, in the ſecond place, conſider what is neceſſary to give it real value as a moral virtue. This is of the utmoſt importance, and muſt appear ſo to all who will conſider the ſubject with attention. That I may ſet the matter in as clear a light as poſſible, obſerve, that to render magnanimity a valuable quality, it muſt further have the following characters.

1. The object of our deſires muſt be juſt as well as great. Some of the nobleſt powers of the human mind, have often been exerted in invading the rights, inſtead of promoting the intereſt and happineſs of mankind. As the hiſtory of the world is little elſe than the hiſtory of human guilt; ſo, many of the moſt illuſtrious names tranſmitted down to us, have been thoſe of the moſt active and ſucceſsful deſtroyers of their fellow-creatures. There may be, and there have been in ſuch perſons, many or moſt of the ingredients of natural greatneſs of mind; but theſe have only ſerved to make the characters, in the eye of reaſon, more hideous and deteſtable.

2. Our deſires ought to be governed by wiſdom and prudence, as well as juſtice. If any perſon either forms difficult proſpects, or aſpires after great poſſeſſions, and in proſecution of his purpoſes, exerts ever ſo much courage, fortitude and patience; yet, if theſe deſigns are leſs

uſeful, or theſe poſſeſſions leſs valuable, than others to which he might have applied the ſame talents, it cannot deſerve the name of true magnanimity. If any perſon, for example, forms a reſolution of exerting his ſkill, in ſuch feats or performances as have nothing or very little valuable in them, but that they are difficult and uncommon, I think no man will pretend that he has any title to the character of greatneſs of mind, otherwiſe a rope-dancer might be a hero: Or, if any perſon ſhould ſpend a whole life, in the moſt unwearied application to the ſingle purpoſe of accumulating wealth, however vaſt his deſires, or however aſtoniſhing his ſucceſs, his merit would be very ſmall. Nay, we muſt be ſenſible that he has loſt many opportunities of doing ſignal ſervice to mankind, and of acquiring more valuable and durable enjoyments, while in purſuit of this, which after all, will diſappoint his hopes.

3. The principle of action muſt be honorable, as well as the achievements illuſtrious. If a perſon does things ever ſo extraordinary in their nature, overcomes the greateſt difficulties, or braves the moſt formidable dangers, merely to make his name famous, we muſt at once perceive how much it detracts even from his name itſelf. This is not the language of religion only, it is the language of reaſon, and the dictate of the human heart. An inſatiable thirſt for praiſe, is ſo far from being amiable, that it is hateful or contemptible. I am ſenſible that a thirſt for fame, is not only apparent in, but ſeems to have been confeſſed by many of the moſt diſtinguiſhed heroes of antiquity; but as it certainly does abate in a good degree, the luſtre of their good actions, ſo the indulgence that is given them, upon this head, is wholly owing to the diſadvantages they lay under, in a ſtate of heatheniſm, and their ignorance of a better and nobler principle.—"Nothing," ſays an eminent author, "can be great, the "contempt of which is great;" and therefore, if a contempt of riches, a neglect of fame, and a readineſs to ſacrifice both to duty and uſefulneſs, is one of the moſt glorious characters we can conceive, it is plain, that not the deeds, but the priniciple is the evidence, and not the

head nor the hands of man, but the heart is the ſeat of genuine greatneſs.

4. In the laſt place, in order to real greatneſs, every attempt muſt be poſſible and rational, perhaps probable. Nothing is more common than to find perſons, under the pretence of great and illuſtrious deſigns, proſecuting what is not of any value when obtained, and at the ſame time ſcarcely poſſible, and no way probable to be obtained at all. This is declining altogether from the line of greatneſs, and going into the path of extravagance. Again, ſhould any man undertake what he was altogether unable to perform, however excellent the deſign were in itſelf, we would not dignify it even with the name of ambition; he would acquire and deſerve the character, not of greatneſs, but of folly or madneſs.

On the whole, it is plain that theſe moral principles, muſt enter into the compoſition of true greatneſs, and that, when they are wanting, the natural characters mentioned before, degenerate into vice, and aſſume the names of pride, ambition, temerity, ferocity and obſtinacy.

This leads me, in the third place, to ſhew, not only that there is nothing in real religion, contrary to magnanimity, but that there, and there only, it appears in its beauty and perfection. Let me briefly run over, and apply to religion, the above-mentioned ingredients of magnanimity.

1. It is to attempt great and difficult things. Religion calls us to the greateſt and moſt noble attempts, whether in a private or a public view. In a private view, it calls us to reſiſt and ſubdue every corrupt and ſinful paſſion, however ſtrongly the indulgence is ſolicited by the tempting object, or recommended by the artful ſeducer. The importance and difficulty of this ſtruggle, appears not only from the holy ſcriptures, but from the experience and teſtimony of mankind in every age. What cautions are given by Solomon upon this ſubject? "He that is "ſlow to anger, is better than the mighty and he that "ruleth his ſpirit, than he that taketh a city." The wiſeſt Heathens have inculcated the neceſſity of ſelf-government, and the danger of ſurrounding temptation, by many

inſtructive images. But why ſhould I extend this part of the ſubject? How few are ſucceſsful in this attempt? This alone is a ſufficient proof, that it is great and difficult, and every perſon exerciſed to godlineſs, will be abundantly ſenſible of it, from the ſtate of his own heart.

In a public view, every good man is called to live and act for the glory of God, and the good of others. Here he has as extenſive a ſcene of activity, as he can poſſibly deſire. He is not indeed permitted to glory or to build an altar to his own vanity; but he is both permitted and obliged to exert his talents, to improve his time, to employ his ſubſtance, and to hazard his life in his Maker's ſervice, or his country's cauſe. Nor am I able to conceive any character more truly great than that of one, whatever be his ſtation or profeſſion, who is devoted to the public good under the immediate order of Providence. He does not ſeek the bubble reputation in the deadly breach, but he complains of no difficulty, and refuſes no ſervice, if he thinks he carries the commiſſion of the King of kings.

2. The truly pious man aſpires after the greateſt and moſt valuable poſſeſſions. He deſpiſes, indeed, the uncertain and the unſatisfying enjoyments of time. His deſires after preſent enjoyments, are ſubjected to the will of God. He has given them up without reſerve, yet his heavenly Father knoweth that he hath need of theſe things, and therefore he both aſks and hopes to receive what is ſuitable and neceſſary, and believes that a little that a juſt man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked. But the glorious object of the Chriſtian's ambition, is the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The honorable relation he ſtands in to God, as his adopted child in Chriſt Jeſus, inclines and authoriſes him to hope for this purchaſed poſſeſſion, and enables him to look down with becoming indifference, on all the glory of this tranſitory world. Let the rich man glory in his riches, and the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom; he only glories in this, that he knoweth the Lord, and ſhall be with him for ever.

3. True piety encounters the greateſt dangers with reſolution. The fear of God is the only effectual mean to deliver us from the fear of man. Experience has abundantly ſhewn, that the ſervants of Chriſt have adhered to his cauſe, and made profeſſion of his name, in oppoſition to all the terrors which infernal policy could preſent to them, and all the ſufferings, with which the moſt ſavage inhumanity could afflict them. But as this belongs to the caſe of perſecution for conſcience ſake, which, by the peculiar kindneſs of Providence is exceedingly rare among us, it is proper to obſerve, that every Chriſtian has frequent opportunities of manifeſting a holy reſolution in encountering the reproach and deriſion of worldly men, for adhering to his duty. And when we conſider how hard it is to bear reproach and ſcorn, called, in ſcripture, *the trial of cruel mockings*, there will appear to be no ſmall meaſure of dignity and heroiſm in him, who can calmly ſubmit to it from every quarter, rather than depart from his duty. There are not a few, who are apt to boaſt of their ſpirit and reſolution, who are yet unable to bear reproach, and meanly make the ſentiments of others, and the caprice of faſhion, the rule of duty, in place of the clear dictates of conſcience and the word of God. How contemptible is this, compared to the conduct of that man, who ſeeks no fame, but by honeſt means, and fears no reproach for honeſt actions, but contents himſelf with a ſilent and believing regard to him who ſeeth in ſecret, and who ſhall at laſt bring every work into judgment.

4. True piety perſeveres with conſtancy in oppoſition to continual trial. This is indeed what diſtinguiſhes the Chriſtian warfare from that of every other. It continues through life, and the laſt enemy to be overcome is death. In all the conflicts between men on earth, the iſſue may be ſpeedily expected, and the reward immediately beſtowed; but in religion, it is only he who ſhall endure to the end that ſhall be ſaved. This adds greatly to the difficulty, and ſeems to ſhew, not only the excellence and beauty, but the real dignity and magnanimity of the Chriſtian character.

5. In the laſt place, true piety endures ſuffering with patience and fortitude. If we reflect upon the number of ſuffering martyrs, whoſe teſtimonies are upon record, we ſhall ſee with what calmneſs and compoſure, with what undaunted firmneſs, and ſometimes with what exultation and triumph they have gone to a ſcaffold, or been tied to a ſtake. Can any perſon, think you, who hath gone to the field of battle, in queſt of glory, or who hath braved the danger of the ſeas, in queſt of wealth or power, be once compared with thoſe who have chearfully given up the precious life, or ſubmitted their bodies to the torture, to keep their conſciences undefiled? But, my brethren, Chriſtian patience is much more frequently tried in another manner. The believer has made an unreſerved ſurrender of himſelf and his all, to the diſpoſal of Providence: His faithfulneſs to this promiſe, is brought almoſt every day to the trial. For the Chriſtian then to ſuffer reproach, without rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, to be ſubmiſſive under the loſs of ſubſtance, and ſay with Job, Job i. 21. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, "and naked ſhall I return thither: the Lord gave, and "the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of the "Lord."—To yield up relations, and to ſay with David, 2 Sam. xii. 23. "I ſhall go to him, but he ſhall not return "to me." To look forward to approaching death, and ſay with the apoſtle Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 6. "I am now rea-"dy to be offered, and the time of my departure is at "hand." This is magnanimity indeed; this is the moſt ſolid glory to which any child of Adam can poſſibly attain. I proceed in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid.

1. You may learn, from what hath been ſaid, that whenever honor differs from conſcience, it is a treacherous guide; wherever ſpirit and dignity of mind, as a worldly virtue, differs from true religion, and even from the ſimplicity of the goſpel, it is falſe and ſpurious. The goſpel, it is true, will not ſuffer men to ſeek revenge, or to delight in it. It will humble them in the ſight of God, and make them ſelf-denied in the preſence of men, yet it will conſtrain them not to refuſe any duty to the one, or any

uſeful ſervice to the other. It will not ſuffer them to be ambitious of higher places of honor and truſt, but it will make them active and zealous in the duties of that place, in which they already are. It will not ſuffer them to reſent injuries and gratify revenge; but it will make them withſtand a king upon his throne, if he preſume to interfere in the matters of their God. What is there here that is not noble?

After all, the teſtimony in favor of true piety, is univerſal, if carefully attended to. Every one muſt acknowledge, that oſtentation, and love of praiſe, and whatever is contrary to the ſelf-denial of the goſpel, tarniſhes the beauty of the greateſt actions. Courage and modeſty, merit and humility, majeſty and condeſcenſion, appear with tenfold glory, when they are united; it is impoſſible to ſeparate them; to divide, is to deſtroy them. They are like light and ſhade in a picture, which are neceſſary to each other, and which, by their union, conſtitute the beauty and augment the luſtre of the piece. So true is this, that the higheſt poliſh that any perſon can receive in commerce with the world, is to have an apparent diſpoſition to prefer the intereſt of others to his own, to guard againſt every degree of offence, and to be always ready to oblige. I have often been pleaſed with that obſervation of a foreigner of high rank,* that worldly politeneſs is only an imperfect imitation of Chriſtian charity; it is nothing elſe but a ſtudied appearance of that deference to the judgment, and attention to the intereſt of others, which a true Chriſtian hath, as the rule of his duty, and the diſpoſition of his heart.

2. Suffer me to obſerve, that as Chriſtian magnanimity is more excellent than that of the world, it is alſo more practicable, and, in fact, more univerſal. Worldly magnanimity is what always requires ſuch talents, as do not fall to the lot of many, and ſuch opportunities for its exerciſe, as ſeldom occur. The road to heroiſm is not open to every man. But that magnanimity, which is the fruit of true religion, being indeed the product of divine grace, is a virtue of the heart, and may be attained by perſons of

* The Prince of Conti.

mean talents and narrow poſſeſſions, and in the very loweſt ſtations of human life. In fact, there have been, and are daily examples of it in every rank. We ſee the heroic fortitude of the martyrs, as manifeſt in thoſe of early years, and the weakeſt ſex, as in any other; and whoever will viſit the ſolitary walks of life, may find, in the loweſt ſtations, humility, thankfulneſs, patience under affliction, and ſubmiſſion to Providence, ſuch as would do honor to the moſt appproved virtue, and the moſt enlightened mind. To deſpiſe riches, and reſtrain the motions of envy and impatience, in a needy ſtate, is perhaps as truly noble as to improve them wiſely in a higher.

Thus the honor, which is chiefly deſirable, is equally open to the rich and to the poor, to the learned and to the unlearned, to the wiſe and to the unwiſe, as it cometh from God, who is no reſpecter of perſons. One of the beſt and happieſt effects of ſerious reflection is, to bring us, in a great meaſure, all upon a level; as, indeed, in one moſt important reſpect, the magiſtrate with his robes, the ſcholar with his learning, and the day-laborer that ſtands unnoticed, are all upon the ſame footing—for we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt.

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

STUDENTS OF THE SENIOR CLASS,

On the Lord's Day preceding Commencement,

September 23, 1775.

GENTLEMEN,

AS you have now finiſhed the uſual courſe of ſtudy in this place, and are to enter upon public life in a variety of ways, as each ſhall be determined by inclination or other circumſtances, I willingly embrace the opportunity of addreſſing an exhortation to you, at this important and intereſting period of your lives. I do not mean to ſay much, if any thing, that you have never heard before, but to lay hold of your preſent ſituation, with ſome hope, that what may be ſaid now, will remain upon your memory, and have an influence upon your future conduct. That I may ſpeak with the greater clearneſs and preciſion, I will divide what I have to ſay, into three branches. 1. Your duty to God, and the intereſt of your ſouls. 2. The proſecution of your ſtudies, or the improvement of your talents, as members of ſociety. 3. Prudence in your commerce with the world in general, your outward proviſion, and other circumſtances in life.

I. As to the firſt of theſe, it is to all men of the greateſt moment. Some of you, I know, and more, I hope, are intended for the ſervice of Chriſt in the miniſtry. To this we have the univerſal ſuffrage, that true religion is abſolutely neceſſary, with which I heartily agree. But I wiſh thoſe who are deſtined for other employments, may not ſometimes make a compariſon here, unjuſt in itſelf, and dangerous, perhaps even ruinous, to their own ſouls. Becauſe true religion is neceſſary to a miniſter, and they are conſcious to themſelves, or at leaſt ſuſpect, that they are without religion; inſtead of laying to heart the things that belong to their peace, they only determine that they will follow ſome other calling. But alas! though the difference to the public is very great, the difference to the perſons themſelves, ſeems to me but very ſmall. A clergyman without religion, to be ſure is a dreadful character, and, when viſible, a deteſtible one; but truly, one would think, at the cloſe of life, it will be but little comfort to a man, that he muſt go to the place of torment, not as a miniſter, but as a lawyer, phyſician, ſoldier, or merchant. Therefore ſuffer me to ſay to you, and to all who now hear me, that the care of your ſouls is the one thing needful. All mankind, of every rank, denomination and profeſſion, are ſinners by nature. The miniſters of the New Teſtament have received a commiſſion to preach the goſpel to every creature: "He that believeth ſhall be ſaved, and "he that believeth not ſhall be damned."

While I ſay this, I beg of you to conſider that the advantages which you have enjoyed, will be an aggravation of your guilt, if they are unimproved. There is an equity as well as wiſdom often to be obſerved in the providence of God. Unleſs reaſons of ſovereignty, that is, reaſons unknown to us, prevent it, judgment will be inflicted, when a perſon or people is ripe for the ſtroke. Therefore, as ſome plants and ſeeds, both from their own nature, and from the ſoil and ſituation in which they are placed, ripen ſooner than others, ſo ſome perſons, by the early pains taken upon them, and the privileges they have enjoyed, fill up the meaſure of their iniquities ſooner than others, and are more ſpeedily overtaken with deſerv-

ed vengeance. There are many common ſayings that are the effects of error and prejudice; for example, that which you will be told by many, that the children of good men are as bad as any. If this is intended to inſinuate that a regular and pious education affords no ground to hope for good behaviour in after life, it is at once contrary to reaſon and experience. But if we ſhould ſay that when young perſons piouſly educated, burſt reſtraining bonds aſunder, and are ſeduced into vicious courſes, they commonly run faſter and farther than others, it is a certain fact, which may be eaſily accounted for, and affords an important inſtruction to all.

After intreating you to lay religion to heart, I muſt beſeech you to guard againſt being too eaſily ſatisfied in a matter of infinite moment. Do not think it enough to be prudent, cautious, or decent in your conduct, or to attain a character formed upon worldly principles, and governed by worldly motives. I am not againſt (as you all know) introducing every argument againſt ſin, and ſhewing you that looſe practices are ruinous to name, body and eſtate. Neither is it wrong that you ſhould fortify every pious reſolution by the addition of theſe motives. But alas! the evil lies deeper. "Except a man be born "again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." True religion muſt ariſe from a clear and deep conviction of your loſt ſtate by nature and practice, and an unfeigned reliance on the pardoning mercy and ſanctifying grace of God.

Suffer me, upon this ſubject, earneſtly to recommend to all that fear God, to apply themſelves from their earlieſt youth, to the exerciſes of piety, a life of prayer and communion with God. This is the ſource from which a real Chriſtian muſt derive the ſecret comfort of his heart, and which alone will give beauty, conſiſtency, and uniformity, to an exemplary life. The reaſon why I have mentioned it on this occaſion is, that youth, when the ſpirits are lively, and the affections vigorous and ſtrong, is the ſeaſon when this habit muſt be formed. There are advantages and diſadvantages attending every ſtage of life. An aged Chriſtian will naturally grow in prudence, vigilance, uſe-

fulneſs, attention to the courſe of providence, and ſubjection to the divine will, but will ſeldom attain to greater fervor of affection, and life in divine worſhip, than he had been accuſtomed to from his early years. On the contrary, he will generally ſee it neceſſary inſtead of truſting to occaſional impulſes, to guard and ſtrengthen the habit by order and form.

Be companions of them that fear God. Eſteem them always moſt highly, and ſhun, as a contagious peſtilence, the ſociety not only of looſe perſons, but of thoſe eſpecially whom you perceive to be infected with the principles of infidelity, or enemies to the power of religion.—Many of theſe are much more dangerous to pious perſons than open profligates. As for theſe laſt, decency is againſt them; the world itſelf condemns them; reaſon deſpiſes them, and prudence ſhuns them. He muſt have a very mean taſte indeed, who is capable of finding pleaſure in diſorder and riot. If I had no higher pleaſure on earth than in eating and drinking, I would not chooſe to eat and drink with the drunken. Order, neatneſs, elegance, and even moderation itſelf, are neceſſary to exalt and refine the pleaſures of a ſenſual life. Therefore I will not allow myſelf to ſuppoſe, that I ſhall afterwards hear of any of you roaring and ſwearing in taverns, or waſting your bodies and eſtates by lewdneſs and debauchery, or that you take pleaſure in thoſe who do ſo. But be eſpecially careful to avoid thoſe who are enemies to vital piety, who do not pretend to ſpeak directly againſt religion, but give every vile name they can think of, to all who ſeem to be in earneſt on that ſubject, and vilify the exerciſes of religion, under the names of whining, cant, grimace, and hypocriſy. Theſe are often unhappily ſucceſsful in making ſome uncautious perſons aſhamed of their Redeemer's name, his truths, his laws, his people, and his croſs.

I need hardly obſerve, that this is not to be underſtood as recommending phariſaical pride and ſuperciliouſneſs; far leſs, a raſh and preſumptuous judging of the ſtate of others. It is not only lawful, but our duty, to have a free communication with our fellow-citizens, for the purpoſes of ſocial life: it is not only lawful, but our duty to be

courteous, and to give every proper evidence of reſpect and attention to others, according to their rank and place in ſociety. What I mean to caution you againſt is, an unneceſſary, voluntary intercourſe, ſuch as has inclination for its motive, and pleaſure for its object. With reſpect to this, we need not heſitate to ſay, with the inſpired prophet, "He that walketh with wiſe men ſhall be wiſe, but "a companion of fools ſhall be deſtroyed."

II. I come now to ſpeak a little upon the proſecution of your ſtudies, and the improvement of your talents. Your education in a ſeminary of learning, is only intended to give you the elements and firſt principles of ſcience, which ſhould whet your appetite for more, and which will enable you to proceed with an aſſured hope of ſucceſs. It hath been generally a favorite point with me, to recommend the union of piety and literature, and to guard young perſons againſt the oppoſite extremes. We ſee ſometimes the pride of unſanctified knowledge, do great injury to religion; and on the other hand, we find ſome perſons of real piety, deſpiſing human learning, and diſgracing the moſt glorious truths, by a meanneſs and indecency hardly ſufferable in their manner of handling them. On this account, induſtry and application to ſtudy, is of the utmoſt importance to thoſe who are intended for the office of the miniſtry.

But I have it further in view, to recommend to you all, without exception, a life of diligence and application. Avoid ſloth, as a dangerous enemy. Fear it, hate it, and deſpiſe it. It is a common ſaying, that men do not know their own weakneſs; but it is as true, and a truth more important, that they do not know their own ſtrength. I deſire that you will receive the following information from me, which I dare ſay, every perſon of judgment and experience will confirm, that multitudes of moderate capacity have been uſeful in their generation, reſpected by the public, and ſucceſsful in life, while thoſe of ſuperior talents from nature, by mere ſlothfulneſs and idle habits, or ſelf-indulgence, have lived uſeleſs, and died contemptible. There is alſo a diſpoſition in young people, which you

know I have often ſet myſelf to oppoſe, to think that looſe, irregular ſallies, and ſometimes even vicious liberties, are a ſign of ſpirit and capacity. The very contrary is the truth. It requires no genius at all to do miſchief. Perſons of the greateſt ability have generally been lovers of order. Neither is there any inſtance to be found, of a man's arriving at great reputation or uſefulneſs, be his capacity what it might, without induſtry and application.

Suffer me here, in a particular manner, to recommend to you a firmneſs of mind, and ſteady perſeverance, as of the utmoſt moment to your progreſs and ſucceſs. Whatever a man's talents from nature may be, if he apply himſelf to what is not altogether unſuitable to them, and holds on with ſteadineſs and uniformity, he will be uſeful and happy; but if he be looſe and volatile, impatient of the ſlowneſs of things in their uſual courſe, and ſhifting from project to project, he will probably be neither the one nor the other.

I am ſomewhat at a loſs what to ſay, as to character and reputation; yet it is ſo important a point, that it muſt not be omitted. True religion ſhould furniſh you with a higher and nobler principle to govern your conduct, than the deſire of applauſe from men. Yet, in ſubordination to what ought to be the great purpoſe of life, the approbation of the ſupreme Judge, there is a juſt and laudable ambition to do what is praiſe-worthy among men. This ought not to be extinguiſhed in the minds of youth; being a powerful ſpur and incitement to virtuous or illuſtrious actions. A truly good man will ſeek no praiſe but by honeſt means, and will be ſuperior even to diſgrace itſelf, if brought upon him by adherence to his duty. Yet he will alſo be tender and careful, not to give juſt cauſe to any to impeach his conduct. If I might be permitted to direct your views upon this ſubject, I would ſay, conſider that your character is already beginning to form. Every ſtep you take further in life, will both aſcertain and ſpread it. You ought alſo to be informed, that notwithſtanding all the hackneyed complaints of the partiality and cenſoriouſneſs of the world, a man's real character, in point of ability, is *never* miſtaken, and but *ſeldom* in point of morals. That there are many malicious and cenſorious perſons, I

agree; but lies are not half ſo durable as truth. There is an impartiality in a diffuſive public, which will ſhew itſelf where means of information are afforded to it. Therefore reverence the judgment of mankind without idolizing it. Be as cautious as poſſible to do nothing that deſerves cenſure, and as little concerned as poſſible what reproaches may fall upon you undeſerved. It is not a contradiction, but perfectly conſiſtent to ſay, a man ſhould be tender and even jealous of his character, and yet not greedy of praiſe. There is an amiableneſs and dignity in the firſt, but a meanneſs and littleneſs in the laſt.

Another advice, near a-kin to the laſt, is, do as much as you can to deſerve praiſe, and yet avoid as much as poſſible the hearing of it. This is but another view of the ſame ſubject; and that it may be the more uſeful, and my intention in it the more manifeſt, I will extend it both to praiſe and diſpraiſe. When you come into public life, and become the objects of general attention, not only guard againſt fiſhing for applauſe, and being inquiſitive after what people think or ſay of you, but avoid knowing it as much as you decently can. My reaſon for this is, that whether you will or not, you will hear as much of the ſlanders of your enemies as you will bear with patience, and as much of the flattery of your friends, or intereſted perſons, as you will bear with humility. Therefore, prepare yourſelf for both, but ſeek for neither. Several eminent authors, as you doubtleſs know, have given it as an advice to young clergymen, and other public ſpeakers, to get a friend who is a good judge, and intreat him to make remarks upon their compoſition, carriage, delivery, &c. with fidelity. I have nothing to ſay againſt the goodneſs of the advice in itſelf, but at the ſame time, I have no great conviction of the neceſſity or even the utility of it. It is very ſeldom that advice is aſked in this manner, but with a view to obtain a compliment; and ſtill ſeldomer that it is given with ſufficient freedom and impartiality. If any man has humility and ſelf-denial enough to wiſh to know his own faults, there will be little difficulty in diſcovering them. Or if we could ſuppoſe, there were difficulty to himſelf, his enemies or rivals, or talkative per-

ple, though they be neither the one nor the other, will ſupply the defect. Perhaps you will think, that in the ſtrictures of malice and envy, there is generally an acrimony that has no great tendency to reform; like a ruſty knife, which makes a very painful wound, though not very deep. I agree to this fully, and yet affirm, that there is ſo much the more virtue, ſo much the more wiſdom, and perhaps I may add, ſo much the more pleaſure in making this uſe of them.

I conclude this part of my ſubject, with adviſing you to maintain a friendſhip with one another, and to carry the intimacies of early life, through the whole of it. To this I add, that you ought to deſire and cultivate the correſpondence of men of piety and learning. Man made for ſociety, derives his chief advantages of every kind, from the united efforts of many conſpiring to the ſame end.—As to piety, nothing is more eſſential to it, than ſocial communication. It properly conſiſts in the ſupreme love of God, and fervent charity to all men. The Chriſtian alſo hath need of the aſſiſtance of others in his paſſage through this world, where he has ſo much oppoſition to encounter. Thoſe who deſerve this character, are ſaid to be pilgrims and ſtrangers in the earth. Therefore they ought to keep together, leſt they loſe their way. They comfort each other in diſtreſs, they aſſiſt each other in doubts and difficulty, they embolden each other by their example, and they aſſiſt each other by their prayers.

This is no leſs the caſe in reſpect to literature. It has been obſerved, that great and eminent men have, generally, in every nation, appeared in cluſters. The reaſon of this probably is, that their ſociety and mutual intercourſe greatly adds to their improvement, and gives force and vigor to the talents which they may ſeverally poſſeſs. Nothing is ſo powerful an incitement to diligence, or ſo kindles the beſt ſort of ambition, as the friendſhip, advice, and aſſiſtance of men of learning and worth. The approbation of one ſuch, is of more value to a noble mind, than peals of applauſe from an undiſcerning multitude. Beſides, the aſſiſtance which men of letters give to each other, is really neceſſary in the execution of particular works of

great compaſs and utility. If it is by the labors of preceding ages, that it is now poſſible in one life to attain to ſuch a degree of knowledge as we have ſometimes ſeen, ſo it is by the concurrence of many friends lending their aſſiſtance, that one man has been ſometimes able to preſent to the public, a ſyſtem of ſcience, which, without that aid, he alone would have in vain attempted to bring to perfection. There is no circumſtance which throws this new country ſo far back in point of ſcience, as the want of public libraries, where thorough reſearches might be made, and the ſmall number of learned men to aſſiſt in making reſearches practicable, eaſy or complete.

III. The laſt head on which I promiſed to give you my advice, was prudence in your communication with the world in general, your outward proviſion and other circumſtances that conduce to the happineſs and comfort of life. On this ſubject, I begin with what I have often recommended to you, frugality in the management of your affairs, order and exactneſs in your dreſs, furniture, books, and keeping of accounts. Nothing could be further from my mind than to recommend the temper or conduct of avaricious men, whoſe ſordid ſouls have no higher ambition, and indeed, hardly any other deſire than that of getting pelf. This is not only unbecoming a gentleman and a ſcholar, but, in my opinion, wholly inconſiſtent with the character. I never knew an inſtance of a perſon in whom this diſpoſition took place in early life, that could apply to ſtudy, or that became eminent in any thing that was good. The oppoſite vice is the common fault of youth, and it is againſt this I would caution you. The frugality I would recommend, is that of an independent mind, that fears and ſcorns ſubjection to others, and remembers the juſt ſaying of Solomon, that *the borrower is ſervant to the lender*. That frugality which ariſes from order and œconomy, is not only conſiſtent with, but it is the parent of liberality of ſentiment and generoſity of conduct. It is indeed the ſource of beneficence, for no man can beſtow out of an empty purſe. On the other hand, covetouſneſs

and profuſion, are by no means repugnant to each other; and indeed they are more frequently joined than many apprehend. The ſtricture of Salluſt in the character of Cataline, *alieni appetens sui profusus*, has been often cited, and may generally be applied to looſe and profligate livers. I hope therefore you will learn betimes to diſtinguiſh between the virtue and the vice, and to adhere to the one as much as you deſpiſe the other.

I will make an obſervation here, which may be applied not only to the diſtinction of character in this inſtance, but in almoſt every other that has been, or ſhall be mentioned. It will be much your intereſt, if you learn betimes to make not a haſty but a deliberate and candid judgment, when you infer character from appearances. The habits of life which men contract, give a bias to their opinions and even a tincture to their converſation and phraſeology. Perſons inclined to levity and diſſipation, will often aſcribe to covetouſneſs, what ariſes from very different cauſes. I have known, even in youth, a perſon declining to engage in a party of pleaſure, accuſed by his companions as mean and ſneaking, and afraid of his purſe, when, in reality, it was not that he loved money more, but pleaſure leſs. It may ſometimes happen, that a perſon of principle, will ſee it proper to decline meetings of feſtivity, though not directly ſinful, as an unneceſſary waſte of time, or from ſome other circumſtance to him dangerous and enſnaring. I have alſo ſeen perſons more advanced in years, who from a habit, perhaps a neceſſary habit of ſtrict temperance, and retired manner of life, were very ſparing of perſonal expence, and even not much diſpoſed to ſocial intercourſe, and therefore called cloſe or covetous, and yet when applied to, for pious or charitable purpoſes, would be much more liberal than others of an oppoſite turn of mind. Obſervations perfectly ſimilar might be made upon the oppoſite character of liberality. It is not every kind of openneſs of heart that indicates profuſion. We are told by Solomon, Prov. xi. 25. "That the liberal "ſoul ſhall be made fat," and by the prophet Iſaiah, Iſa. xxxii. 8. "That the liberal deſireth liberal things, and "by liberal things he ſhall be eſtabliſhed." From theſe

contraſted remarks, I infer, that as it is ſeldom neceſſary to judge peremptorily of others, ſo forbearance and the moſt charitable allowance, is both our duty and intereſt.

In the next place, I recommend to you, humility of heart and meekneſs of carriage. I conſider in this place, the grace of humility as a virtue eſpecially ſerviceable to your earthly comfort. I conſider and mean to treat it as a maxim of worldly prudence. The ſcripture ſeems to point it out as peculiarly neceſſary for this purpoſe, and to annex the promiſe of earthly happineſs to the practice of it: Matth. v. 5. "Bleſſed are the meek," ſays our Saviour, "for they ſhall inherit the earth." I would underſtand him as ſaying, every good man ſhall inherit the kingdom of heaven, but thoſe who excel in meekneſs, ſhall of all others have comfort on earth. In many different views, we may ſee the propriety of this connection. Nothing is more offenſive to others, than a proud, aſſuming manner. It not only magnifies every fault, but vitiates even good conduct. It is not only odious to virtuous perſons, but it is equally, if not more ſo, to thoſe who are without principle. Some vices recommend a man to the vicious in the ſame line, as one drunkard is pleaſed with the ſight of another; but nothing is ſo hateful to a proud man, as another of the ſame character, nor is offence ſooner given or taken than between thoſe, who, in this reſpect, perfectly reſemble one another. This vice is not only odious to perſons of underſtanding and reflection, but to the moſt ignorant, being as eaſily perceived as it is univerſally hated.

The moral virtue of meekneſs and condeſcenſion, is the beſt ground work even of worldly politeneſs, and prepares a man to receive that poliſh, which makes his behavior generally agreeable, and fits him for intercouſe with perſons in the higher ranks of life. The ſame virtue, by the compoſure and ſelf-command that accompanies it, enables a man to manage his affairs to advantage, in whatever calling he may be engaged, or in whatever ſtation he may be placed. A good ſhopkeeper is commonly remarkable for this quality. People love to go where they meet with good words and gentle treatment;

whereas the peeviſh and petulent may be ſaid to have a repelling quality about them, that will not ſuffer any body to approach them.

To complete the whole, meekneſs of ſpirit is as uſeful to a man's ſelf, as meekneſs of carriage is acceptable to others. The meek ſuffer much leſs from the unavoidable evils of life, than thoſe of a contrary diſpoſition. Many croſs accidents of the leſs important kind, are in a manner annihilated when they are borne with calmneſs. The injury they do us, is not owing half ſo much to their weight or ſeverity, as to the irritability of their own minds. It is evident that the ſame diſpoſition muſt greatly alleviate calamities of a heavier kind; and from analogy you may perceive, that as it mitigates the ſorrows, it multiplies and adds to the ſweetneſs of the comforts of life. A moderate portion, gives greater ſatisfaction to the humble and thankful, than the moſt ample poſſeſſions to the proud and impatient.

Nearly allied to the above virtue, is the government of your paſſions, and therefore of this I ſhall ſay but little. Every one muſt be ſenſible how important is, both for the ſucceſs of your worldly callings, and your uſefulneſs in public life, to have your paſſions in due ſubjection. Men of furious and ungoverned tempers, prone to exceſs in attachment and reſentment, either as to perſons or things, are ſeldom ſucceſsful in their purſuits, or reſpected and uſeful in their ſtations. Perſons of ungoverned paſſions, are almoſt always fickle and changeable in their meaſures, which is of all things the moſt fatal to important undertakings. Theſe generally require time and patience to bring them to perfection. As to public and political life in particular, the neceſſity of ſelf government is ſo great, and ſo univerſally acknowledged, that it is uſual to impute it in eminent men, not to principle, but to addreſs and policy. It is commonly ſaid, that politicians have no paſſions. Without inquiring into this, I ſhall only ſay, that whatever truth may be in it, is ſtill in favor of my argument. The hypocriſy does honor to the virtue. If the appearance be ſo neceſſary or ſo uſeful, what muſt be the value of the reality?

I will here take an opportunity of confuting, or at leaſt correcting a common ſaying or proverbial ſentiment, many of which indeed that obtain belief in a blinded world, are nothing but falſe colouring and deception. It is uſual to ſay, in defence of ſudden and violent paſſion, that it is better to ſpeak freely and openly, than to harbor and cover ſecret heart malice. Perhaps I might admit that this would be true, if the inward rage were to be as violent, and continue as long, and return as often, as indulged paſſion. Every perſon muſt agree, that wherever there is a deep and laſting hatred, that never forgets nor forgives, but waits for the opportunity of vengeance, it deſerves to be conſidered as a temper truly infernal. But in moſt inſtances of offence between man and man, to reſtrain the tongue is the way to govern the heart. If you do not make mention of an injury, you will truly and ſpeedily forgive it, and perhaps literally forget it. Rage is in this reſpect like a fire, if a vent is given to it, it will increaſe and ſpread, while there is fuel to conſume, but if you can confine and ſtifle it, you will completely extinguiſh it.

To the government of the paſſions ſucceeds the government of the tongue. This indeed will in a great meaſure, be the effect of the former, and therefore is recommended by all the ſame arguments, yet it deſerves very particular attention, ſeparately as a maxim of prudence. There are great indiſcretions in ſpeech, that do not ariſe from paſſion, but from inattention and want of judgment as to the propriety of time and place, and indeed many other ſources. I would therefore earneſtly recommend to you, to habituate yourſelves to reſtraint in this reſpect, eſpecially in the early part of life. "Be ſwift to hear," ſays Solomon, "and ſlow to ſpeak." Forwardneſs in ſpeech is always thought an aſſuming thing in youth, and in promiſcuous companies, is often conſidered as an inſult, as well as an indiſcretion. It is very common for the world in general, and ſtill more ſo for men of judgment and penetration, to form an opinion of a character on the whole, from ſome one circumſtance, and I think there are few things more unfavorable in this way than a talka-

tive diſpoſition. If the firſt time I am in company, eſpecially with a young man, he talks inceſſantly and takes the whole converſation to himſelf, I ſhall hardly be brought to have a good opinion of him, whether what he ſays be good or evil, ſenſe or nonſenſe. There are ſome perſons, who, one might ſay, give away ſo much wiſdom in their ſpeech, that they leave none behind to govern their actions.

But the chief danger of an ungoverned tongue, is, that it kindles the fire of contention among others, and makes enemies to a man's ſelf. Solomon ſays, "Where no tale-"bearer is, the ſtrife ceaſeth." A little experience will ſhew you, how unſafe it is to uſe much freedom in ſpeech with abſent perſons. In that caſe you put yourſelf wholly in the power of thoſe that hear you, and are in danger, not only from their treachery or malice, but from their miſtakes, ignorance and imprudence. Perhaps it would be too rigid to ſay, that you ought never to ſpeak to a man's prejudice in his abſence, what you would be unwilling to ſay in his preſence. Some exceptions to this rule, might eaſily be conceived. But both prudence and candor require that you ſhould be very reſerved in this reſpect, and either adhere ſtrictly to the rule, or be ſure that good reaſons will juſtify a departure from it.

This will be a very proper place to give you ſome directions, as the moſt proper conduct, when you ſuffer from the tongues of others. Many and grievous are the complaints of what men ſuffer from the envenomed ſhafts of envy and malice. And there certainly is a ſtrong diſpoſition in ſome to invent, and in many to believe ſlanderous falſehoods. The prevalence of party, in religion or politics, never fails to produce a plentiful crop of this poiſonous weed. One of the moſt important rules upon this ſubject is, that when an accuſation is in any degree well-founded, or ſuſpicious appearances have given any occaſion for it, the firſt duty is to reform what is really wrong, and keep at a diſtance from the diſputed limit.

This will bring good out of evil, and turn an injury into a benefit. But in caſes, as it may often happen, when the ſlander is perfectly groundleſs, I hold it to be

in general the beſt way wholly to deſpiſe it. Time and the power of truth, will of themſelves do juſtice in almoſt every caſe of this kind; but if you ſhew an impatience under it, a diſpoſition to reſent it, or a ſolicitude to refute it, the far greateſt part of mankind will believe it not the leſs, but the more. If ſlander were a plant or an animal, I would ſay it was of a very ſtrange nature, for that it would very eaſily die, but could not eaſily be killed. It diſcovers a greatneſs of mind, and a conſcious dignity, to deſpiſe ſlanders, which of itſelf commands reſpect; whereas to be either offended or diſtreſſed by them, ſhews a weakneſs not amiable, whether the accuſation be true or falſe.

This rule I do not ſay is wholly without exception. There may be caſes where vindications may be neceſſary and effectual, but they are not many. And I think I have ſeen in the courſe of my life, reaſon to make the following diſtinction. If the accuſation or ſlander be ſpecial, and relate to a particular fact, fixed by time, place and other circumſtances, and if it be either wholly falſe, or eſſentially miſtaken in its nature and tendency, the matter may be explained, and juſtice may be done. But if it be a general character, that happens to be imputed to a man, he ought to attempt no refutation of it, but by conduct: the more he complains of it, the more he ſpeaks of it, the more he denies it, it will be the more believed. For example, if it be affirmed that a man ſpoke profanely in a certain company, at a certain place and time, when he was not preſent at all, it may be eaſily and completely refuted; but if he is accuſed of being proud, contentious, covetous, or deceitful, although theſe accuſations are pretended to be ſupported by a train facts, it is better to let them wholly alone, and ſuffer his conduct to ſpeak for itſelf. There are inſtances in hiſtory, of accuſations brought with much plauſibility, and urged with great vehemence, which yet have been either from the beginning diſbelieved, or by time confuted; which occaſioned the Latin proverb, *Magna eſt veritas et prævalebit.*

All the above-mentioned particulars may be ſaid to be the happy effects of wiſdom and benevolence united; or rather, perhaps, in the light in which they have been ſta-

ted to you, they are chiefly the proper fruits of that wisdom which is "profitable to direct." But I must add another advice, which is the immediate effect of benevolence and good-will; that is, be ready to assist others, and do good as you have opportunity. As every thing is liable to be abused, sometimes the maxims of prudence take a wrong direction, and close the heart against impressions of sympathy and tenderness towards others in distress. Sometimes indeed, the coolness and composure of spirit, and that self-command, which is the effect of reflection and experience, is mistaken for a callous and unfeeling heart, though it is a very different thing. To give way to the agitation of passion, even under the finest feelings, is the way to prevent, instead of promoting usefulness. A parent, overwhelmed with surprise and anxiety, at a calamitous accident that has befallen a child, shall be incapable either of reflection or activity, and shall sometimes even need the assistance which he ought to give. But independently of this, there are certainly some persons who contract a habit of indifference as to the wants or desires of others, and are not willing to put themselves to any inconvenience, unless their own particular concerns may be promoted at the same time.

In opposition to this, I mean to recommend to you a disposition to oblige, not merely by civil expressions, and an affable deportment, but by taking a real interest in the affairs of others. Be not unwilling to lend your advice, your assistance, your interest, to those that need them. Those who cannot spare pecuniary assistance, may do many acts of valuable friendship. Let every neighbor perceive that you are not ready to quarrel needlessly, nor insist pertinaciously on trifles; and if you live to obtain credit and influence, let them be employed to assist the deserving of every class. If you undertake to do the business of others, attend to it with the same fidelity, and if possible, with greater punctuality than you would to your own. Some are ready to excuse or justify a contrary conduct, by complaining of the ingratitude or injustice of mankind. But, in my opinion, these complaints are contrary to truth and experience. There may be many particular

perſons both ungrateful and unjuſt; but in the world in general, there will be found a clearneſs of diſcernment, and an exactneſs of retribution. Our Saviour tells us, with reſpect to one fault, that of raſh judging, what is equally true as to injuries of every kind, "with what mea-"ſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again; good "meaſure, preſſed down, and ſhaken together, and run-"ning over, ſhall men give into your boſom." Luke vi. 38.

This, in my opinion, may and ought to be underſtood both ways. As the churliſh Nabal generally meets with his match, ſo perſons of a humane and friendly diſpoſition ſhall reap the fruits of it to them or their's. The truth is, the diſpoſition itſelf is not in its perfection, but when there is no regard to an immediate return. If you give, looking for a ſpeedy recompenſe, it is not giving, but ſelling. You may, however, ſafely truſt to the promiſe of God: "Caſt thy bread upon the waters, for thou ſhalt "find it after many days." Eccl. xi. 1.

I have known many inſtances of kindneſſes that were both remembered and requited, after they had been long forgotten by him who beſtowed them. Nay, ſometimes they may be repaid in another generation. It is no inconſiderable legacy for a man to leave to his children, that he had always been a friend to others, and never refuſed his aſſiſtance to thoſe who ſtood in need of it.

It will not be an improper place here to introduce a few words upon a ſubject which has been often handled by writers of the firſt claſs: I mean private friendſhip. Some writers againſt religion have actually made it an objection againſt Chriſtianity, that it does not recommend private friendſhip, or the love of our country. If this were true, it would be no fault; becauſe the univerſal benevolence recommended by the goſpel, includes all private affections, when they are conſiſtent with it, and is far ſuperior to them when they are contrary to it. But in fact, the inſtances of private friendſhip mentioned and alluded to in ſcripture, are a ſufficient recommendation of it; and even our bleſſed Saviour himſelf is ſaid to have diſtinguiſhed the youngeſt of his diſciples with particular

affection. I will therefore obſerve, with moſt authors, that there is no true friendſhip, but what is founded upon virtuous principles, and directed to virtuous purpoſes. To love a perſon who is not worthy of love, is not a virtue, but an error. Neither is there any dependance to be placed, in trying caſes, upon perſons unprincipled at bottom. There never was a true friend, who was not an honeſt man. But beſides this important truth, it is further to be obſerved, that there is a ſpecies of friendſhip which is neither founded on virtue nor vice, but mere weakneſs of mind. Some perſons, having no reſources in themſelves, are obliged to have recourſe to ſome other, upon whom they may lean, and without whom they ſeem as if they could neither think, act, nor even exiſt. This ſort of friendſhip is to be ſeen particularly in princes and perſons of high rank, and is generally called favoritiſm; but the ſame thing may be obſerved in all ranks, though, in the lower, it is not ſo conſpicuous. We may ſay of it, that it is like ſome of thoſe plants that are falſe and ſpurious in their kind, which have ſome of the appearances, but want the moſt valuable and eſſential qualities of thoſe that are genuine. Such friendſhips are commonly contracted by caprice or accident, and uncertain in their duration, being liable to be diſſolved by the ſame means. Valuable friendſhip is the reſult of judgment as well as affection; it is one of the greateſt comforts of life, as well as one of the greateſt ornaments to human nature; and its genuineneſs may be diſcerned by the following mark—that though it is particular, it is not excluſive. When there is a great, but virtuous attachment to a perſon who deſerves it, it will make a man not leſs, but more friendly to all others, as opportunity or circumſtances ſhall call him to ſerve them.

You will perhaps be ſurprized that as I have ſo often expreſſed a deſire of your being accompliſhed in every reſpect, that I have heretofore ſaid nothing or but little on that politeneſs and grace in behavior, which is ſo much talked of, and which, in ſome late writings, has been ſo highly extolled. What has been already explained to you, I hope will lay the foundation for the moſt ſolid,

valuable and durable politeneſs. Think of others as reaſon and religion require you, and treat them as it is your duty to do, and you will not be far from a well-poliſhed behavior. As to any thing further, that is external in mode and propriety of carriage, it can never be learned but by intercourſe with the beſt company. As to the writings above referred to, the chief of which are Rochefoucault's Maxims, and Cheſterfield's Letters, I think of them as of many other free writings, that when viewed properly they may be as uſeful, as by being viewed otherwiſe they are generally pernicious. They contain a digeſted ſyſtem of hypocriſy, and betray ſuch pride and ſelf-ſufficiency, and ſuch hatred or contempt of mankind, as may well be an antidote againſt the poiſon which they mean to convey. Nay, one would think the publication of ſuch ſentiments is ridiculous; becauſe it is telling you that they deſire to be polite, and at the ſame time that this politeneſs conſiſts in taking you by the weak ſide, and diſplaying their own addreſs by over-reaching your's.

I muſt alſo obſerve, that ſuch writers give in general, a very unjuſt as well as diſhonorable view of nature and mankind. I remember indeed, Dean Swift ſays,

"As Rochefoucoult his maxims drew
"From nature, I believe them true."

What muſt I ſay to this? Shall I ſay that he did not draw his maxims from nature? I will not, becauſe I think he did. Am I obliged then to admit them to be true? By no means. It is nature, but it is juſt ſuch a view of nature, as a man without principle muſt take. It is in himſelf that all the error and exaggeration is to be found.

Thoſe who diſcover an univerſal jealouſy, and indiſcriminate contempt for mankind in general, give very little reaſon to think well of themſelves. Probably men are neither ſo good as they pretend, nor ſo bad as they are often thought to be. At any rate, candor in ſentiment as well as conduct, as it is an important duty of religion, ſo it is a wiſe maxim for the conduct of life; and I believe theſe two things are very ſeldom if ever found either ſeparate from, or oppoſed to each other.

The laſt advice that I ſhall offer you, is to preſerve a ſacred and inviolable regard to ſincerity and truth. Thoſe who have received their education here, or at leaſt who have completed it, muſt know how much pains have been taken to eſtabliſh the univerſal and unalterable obligation of truth. This is not however mentioned now to introduce the general ſubject, or to ſhew the guilt, folly and danger of deliberate intereſted falſhood; but to warn you againſt the ſmaller breaches of truth now ſo very common, ſuch as want of punctuality in appointments, breach of promiſe in ſmall matters, officious falſhoods, that is, deceiving children, ſick perſons, or others, for their good; jocular deceptions, which are not intended to continue long, or be materially hurtful to others. Not one of theſe is without ſin before God, and they are much more hurtful than is commonly ſuppoſed. So very ſacred a thing indeed is truth, that the very ſhadow of departure from it is to be avoided. Suppoſe a man only to expreſs his preſent purpoſe as to futurity; for example, to ſay he will go to ſuch a place to-morrow, though there is no proper obligation given, nor any right to require performance, yet if he does ſo often, he will acquire the character of levity, and unſteadineſs, which will operate much to his diſadvantage. Let me therefore recommend to you a ſtrict, univerſal and ſcrupulous regard to truth—It will give dignity to your character—it will put order into your affairs; it will excite the moſt unbounded confidence, ſo that whether your view be your own intereſt, or the ſervice of others, it promiſes you the moſt aſſured ſucceſs. I am alſo perſuaded, that there is no virtue that has a more powerful influence upon every other; and certainly there is none by which you can draw nearer to God himſelf, whoſe diſtinguiſhing character is, that he will not, and he cannot lie.

END OF SECOND VOLUME.

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